


MILTON

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MILTON

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Edited by G. C. WILLIAMSON, Litt.D.

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John Milton

Bell's Miniature Series of Great Writers

MILTON

BY

GEORGE C. WILLIAMSON

LITT.D.



LONDON

GEORGE BELL & SONS

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PREFACE

IN this little volume, which aims only at giving a general account of the life and works of Milton for the young student, the author could make no claim of original research even if such research were still possible with regard to a Master who has already been so very completely studied from all points of view.

He desires to express indebtedness for his facts to the many previous writers who have gone over the same ground, and especially to the exhaustive and altogether admirable work of Professor Masson, the memoir by Mark Pattison, the treatise by Professor Masterman, and the critical remarks of Dr. Johnson and Addison.

The excuse for his temerity in venturing on the impossible task of estimating the works of such an intellectual giant as the subject of this memoir must be found in his very great and abiding admiration for Milton's poetical works ; and for the present purpose he has re-read every line, whether in prose or verse, which is written in English, and has studied afresh many of the Latin treatises.

He hopes the result, however modest, may not fail of its object, which is to induce the reader to study the originals and form his own opinion of them.

He has added the British Museum references to the various early editions to save trouble to the student.

THE MOUNT, GUILDFORD.
April, 1905.

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O mighty mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages ;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrëan
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

TENNYSON.

JOHN MILTON

BIOGRAPHICAL

JOHN MILTON was born on December 9th, 1608. He was the son of a scrivener, who resided in Bread Street, in the City of London, at the sign of the Spread Eagle, the sign having probably been adapted from the armorial bearings of the family, which are to be seen on the agreement for "Paradise Lost," sealed by the poet.

John Milton's grandfather had been a sturdy Catholic who had suffered considerably at the time of the change of religion, and he had disinherited his son John on account of his having joined the Anglican Church.

The family was from Oxfordshire, and John Milton the elder had attended a school in Oxford with a view, it is said, of entering the Church. But on being disinherited he came up to London, and set up as a scrivener close to Cheapside. The poet's mother was a warm-hearted and generous woman, described by her son in the following words: "A most excellent mother, particularly known for her charity through the neigh-

bourhood." She was nine years the junior of her husband, but almost the only other fact that we know respecting her was that her eyesight was not strong, and before she was thirty she had to use glasses, although her husband read without them up to the age of eighty-four.

John Milton the elder was musical, and had written a madrigal, in forty parts, for a Polish prince, who had been so pleased with the composition that he had presented him with a gold chain and medal. The household was both a serious and a musical one, and as the father appears to have been successful in his profession, there was, at least in early days, no lack of means. The lad, it would seem, was destined for the Church, and if the lines written beneath the first engraving of his picture, and usually attributed to his own pen, were his composition, we learn this fact from his own lips in the following words:

When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to know and learn, and thence to do
What might be public good: myself I thought
Born to that end, born to promote all truth
And righteous things.

From his very earliest days, however, his genius for poetry was clearly marked. At the age of ten he had composed some verses, and his two English paraphrases of Psalms CXIV and CXXXVI were made when he was fifteen.

A PARAPHRASE ON PSALM CXIV.

When the blest seed of Terah's faithful son
After long toil their liberty had won,
And passed from Pharian fields to Canaan land,
Led by the strength of the Almighty's hand,
Jehovah's wonders were in Israel shown,
His praise and glory was in Israel known.
That saw the troubled sea, and shivering fled,
And sought to hide his froth-becurled head
Low in the earth ; Jordan's clear streams recoil,
As a faint host that hath received the foil,
The high, huge-bellied mountains skip like rams
Amongst their ewes, the little hills like lambs.
Why fled the ocean? and why skipped the moun-
tains?

Why turnèd Jordan toward his crystal fountains?
Shake, Earth, and at the presence be aghast
Of Him that ever was, and aye shall last,
That glassy floods from rugged rocks can crush,
And make soft rills from fiery flint-stones gush.

PSALM CXXXVI.

Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind ;
For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze his name abroad,
For of gods he is the God ;
For his, &c.

O let us his praises tell,
Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell;
For his, &c.

Who with his miracles doth make
Amazèd heaven and earth to shake ;
For his, &c.

Who by his wisdom did create
The painted heavens so full of state;
For his, &c.

He was sent to St. Paul's school in 1620, when he was twelve years old, but he had commenced his education before then, having been under the care of a private tutor, one Thomas Young, a Scotch Presbyterian Minister, who was afterwards Master of Jesus College, Cambridge.

When Milton became one of the one hundred and fifty-three boys, to which number St. Paul's school in its early days was limited, the High Master was Alexander Gill, "who was esteemed to have such an excellent way of training up youths, that none in his time went beyond him," and to this man and to his son, who assisted him, Milton owed very much of his early training in scholarship and in regular habits of serious study.

He was four years at St. Paul's, and worked exceedingly hard while there, telling us that he was seldom in bed before midnight, and that he overstrained his eyes by too diligent study, and in that way laid the foundation of the disaster which overwhelmed him in later life.

There is little doubt that both his father and the Master of the school were very anxious to see him excel, and were fully aware of his power to do so. But in addition to their desire his own intense energy must be accounted as one of the reasons for this arduous work, and instead of finding his lessons irksome, he was, he tells us, "seized with such eagerness to learn" that he

often "sat up half the night as well in voluntary improvement of his own choice as the exact perfecting of his school exercises."

It was during these four years that he studied Greek, French, Italian, and Hebrew, and so showed at a very tender age his earnest desire to acquire a knowledge of other languages besides his own. It was in his last year at school that he composed the two paraphrases already alluded to; that of Psalm CXXXVI, commencing:

Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for He is kind;

having been sung for many generations by people who little realize that it was the work of a school-boy.

He was quite ready for collegiate life when he left St. Paul's school, and he proceeded, in 1624-5, to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he was admitted on 12th February, and spent the next seven years of his life. The rooms he occupied are still pointed out, the mulberry tree that, according to tradition, he planted, still lives and thrives, and the bath in which he took his early ablutions is one of the distinctive sights in the garden of that interesting old college. He matriculated on the 9th April of the same year. It is probable that the first part of his college career was not in every way satisfactory, and it seems clear that at first he and his tutor, Chappell (afterwards Bishop of Cork), had some differences, and that Milton rebelled against the treatment accorded him, and received some sort

of punishment for his rebellion, although it is not at all likely that the gossip repeated by Aubrey to the effect that he was flogged at Cambridge, was correct. Certainly, however, he came home for a while in 1627, and changed tutors. He was not ashamed of the part he had played in the quarrel, and refers to it in some Latin lines written at the time. Evidently it had no detrimental effect upon his career, for he took his two degrees in regular course. At this time, as Courthope points out, "he had no instinctive sympathy with the iconoclasm of his party, but would rather have rejoiced to see the resources of archaeology, painting, and music placed at the service of religion."

He had the character of being a very serious student, and the nickname given him by his fellow undergraduates, "the lady of Christ's," doubtless had to do partly with the fact that he had a slender oval face of rather feminine appearance, and that he wore his hair long; but also to do with his personal character, and his abstinence from the loose conversation so popular in his time. His ultra-Protestantism at this period of his life is revealed by the Latin poem he wrote on the "Fifth of November" ("In Quintum Novembris"), but his chief poetical works during this period were his "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," his epitaph on Shakespeare, written in 1630, the year of the Plague, and his two epitaphs on Hobson, the Cambridge carrier, dated 1631.

The epitaph on Shakespeare was the first of



JOHN MILTON AS A BOY.

From the oil painting in the Hall of Christ's College, Cambridge.

(By permission of the Master.)

his poetical compositions to be seen in print, as in 1632 the Second Folio of Shakespeare was issued, and the lines written by Milton were included in it, but anonymously. Milton took his B.A. degree on the 26th March, 1629, when twenty years of age, and his M.A. on the 3rd July, 1632, leaving Cambridge in that year. Unpopular when he first came to the University, he appears to have lived down his unpopularity, and to have become a favourite amongst the more serious of both students and tutors, and to have earned much affection and respect from them. He had studied the Classics so closely and become so thoroughly conversant not only with the works of the Greek and Latin authors, but with their very methods of expression, that when he left Cambridge he was a profound Latinist, and able to write and compose in that tongue as easily as in English, while so closely had the language become a part of his life, that he tells us he thought, as a rule, in Latin.

It seems likely that his idea had originally been to enter the Anglican Church, but if that was so, he left Cambridge discontented with his theological position, and already permeated with strong Puritan ideas, in distinct opposition to the views of Laud, at that time coming into marked prominence. His opinions were, however, immature, and the direction for which he looked all through his life was not yet clearly pointing out the path of duty for him. He was conscious of some mission in life, of some definite purpose which he had to carry out, but

what it was he did not yet know. Candour compels one to state that there was a certain self-satisfaction about Milton, a certain pride in his intellectual power that characterized him all through his life, and revealed itself even thus early. In his Petrarchian Stanza composed on his twenty-third birthday, and sent to his great friend, Charles Diodati, whose acquaintance he had first made at St. Paul's school, he clearly asserts his belief in some important destiny prepared for him, and announces that while waiting for the external impressions that would come to his sensitive nature, he is definitely self-reliant and conscious of something extraordinary in his thoughts that will lead him to some special ripeness of manhood. The words are as follows:

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF
TWENTY-THREE.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom sheweth.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endueth.
Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of
Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

It was fortunate for him that his father's means permitted him to await the calling of duty that he anticipated. It is probable that Milton the elder felt some disappointment that his son was unable to adopt the profession for which he had destined him, but although George Herbert and Ferrer could enter the church, it was clear to John Milton that he could not do so. He chafed under the restraints of theological training, inclining neither to the school of Abbot nor that of Laud, but occupying an academic position between the two. The old scrivener had by this time retired, and had left London and taken up his residence at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, about seventeen miles west of London. Here it was that Milton came, and in the five quiet years which he spent at his father's house he composed some of the most exquisite of his verses. No very definite purpose in life for him had yet shaped itself, and the five years appear to have been passed in study, in learning music, and in the composition of poetry.

It seems probable that about this time he had made up his mind that poetry was to be his vocation in life, and that he had no very strong desire to move in the busy world. In 1641 he tells us that he had "an inward prompting which grows daily upon me that by labour and intense study, which I take to be my portion in this life joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times as they should not willingly let it die."

He was in no hurry to determine what this

important work was to be. Poetry was to him so great and so noble a profession that it needed all the self-cultivation and close study that would have been given to such a profession as the Law or the Church. The contrast between this view and the more modern idea of a poet having to be born, and not made, and of poetry flowing spontaneously into the mind, is somewhat startling. It has too often been imagined that the exquisite phraseology of the poet is the result of a divine afflatus rather than of laborious care, and even Charles Lamb said he thought of Milton's "Lycidas" as of a full grown beauty, "springing up with all its parts absolute," until he was confronted with the actual manuscript of the poem, and had the proof before him of the alterations and corrections that the author had deemed it necessary to make in order that the finished work might be as perfect as possible. It is far from our wish to undervalue the divine inspiration of poetry. Without such inspiration there can be no poetic force and no real value in the poem, but inspiration is made up of parts, and without knowledge, wisdom, culture, and hard work it is hardly possible that any poem, however inspired, and however well imagined, can have any quality of immortality about it. Milton regarded his poetic work in the sense of prophecy. It had to be done to the greater glory of God. It was to be as perfect as possible, and it was to be the carrying out of that divine mission within him, the consciousness of which had possessed him from schoolboy days. Hence

no study was too profound, and no labour too great that he might build up the architecture of the poem and shape the thoughts that were burning within him. A commonplace book¹ of Milton's which has been preserved, and reproduced in facsimile, gives us a good idea of the work of this period. It contains notes and extracts from no fewer than eighty authors, in five languages, chiefly on historical subjects, and proves the great variety of reading in which the student was indulging himself. He was not only reading the usually accepted Classic authors, but was studying also Greek, Italian, and French history, Rabbinical literature in its native Hebrew, and was working at Syriac in order to have certain historical literature in that language clear before him. It was during these five years that he laid up that store of scholarship upon which, by the aid of his marvellous memory, he was able to draw so amply in the later years of his life.

It must not be thought, however, that there was no immediate fruition during this period. It has already been casually said that to the time at Horton we owe some of the most exquisite work that Milton ever did, and although we must defer the fuller consideration of this statement to the section dealing with Milton's works, it is needful in this place to refer at least

¹ This note and similar ones which follow it refer to the earliest or best editions of the various works preserved at the British Museum. 1881 a 9 B. M. See also Ac 8113/108.

to the circumstances under which the Horton poems were written.

They comprise "L'Allegro," "Comus," "Il Penseroso," "Arcades," "Lycidas," the "Song on May Morning," "The Nightingale," and other poems. "Arcades" and "Comus" were masques, dramatic pageants, survivals perhaps of the old English mystery play. "Arcades" is only a fragment, for an allegorical pageant. Milton had made the acquaintance of Henry Lawes, the musician, in his time one of the best known composers of the nation, and there was to be a performance at Harefield in honour of some special festivity in connection with the Countess Dowager of Derby, the mother of the Countess of Bridgewater. This Lady Derby, who now lies buried at Harefield, had seen and known Spenser, and to her he had dedicated his "Tears of the Muses." She was a very aged lady, and it is possible that the performance was in honour of her birthday. The music was under the control of Lawes, and Milton provided the three songs, and one short speech which formed the fragment of the masque. The speech praises the virtues of the noble lady, the songs are dainty, graceful utterances, but the whole is too fragmentary to enable us to judge of Milton's poetic qualities, and "Arcades" is interesting more as having been the prelude to "Comus" than for its own sake.

In 1634 this far more important poem was produced. Like "Arcades" it was written for Henry Lawes, and for performance before the

Bridgewater family. Lawes was music master to Lord Bridgewater, and when the Earl was being installed as the Lord President of the Council of Wales in his official residence at Ludlow Castle, Lawes was instructed to compose an allegorical drama which was to be presented before an influential gathering. We do not even know whether the poet saw the performance, or whether those who took part in it knew who was the author of the lines they uttered. We have no record of the performance, and can only learn indirectly that it was very successful, for Lawes was so importuned by his friends for copies of the words, that in 1637 he printed an edition of it,¹ in order that those who desired to possess the poem might have an opportunity of purchasing it. It did not even then, however, bear the author's name, nor, as Pattison points out, does Lawes actually say that he had the author's leave to print it, but it would seem probable from the motto from Virgil:

Eheu! quid volui misero mihi! floribus austrum
Perditus——

put on the title-page that this permission had been given.

The poem was an intense contrast to the ordinary masques by other authors which had preceded it, and which were as a rule overweighted with sensual qualities. It is, however, remarkable that at a time when the drama was being condemned by the Puritans there should

¹ C. 34 d 46 B. M.

have appeared a dramatic composition written for performance by a man whose Puritanism was unmistakable, but who, as has been pointed out, was at this period of his life making a definite protest for the reasonable use of the drama, and for the exquisite satisfactions that come from the legitimate use of art in all its varied forms. At the same time "Comus" was a protest; it depicted the contrast between pleasure and vice, and Comus himself was undoubtedly the spirit of dissolute pleasure which was so characteristic at the time. The conflict depicted by the poet ends in Comus being driven away, and in the liberation of the lady from the spell which had been cast over her. The poem is very full of moral teaching, couched in the stilted classical language which Milton, especially at that time, adopted, and the parts acted by the children must have been far beyond their comprehension. It has no humour in it, but is serious throughout, although for grace of imagery, dainty eloquence of phrase, and rhythmic melody, it has few competitors amongst English dramatic works.

"Lycidas," which was written three years after the date of "Comus," was an elegy upon the death of Edward King, Fellow of Christ's College, one of Milton's old college friends, who had been drowned when crossing the Irish Channel, in August, 1637.¹ Its exquisite and pathetic lines, however, have far more to do with the life of the period, and with Milton's denunciation of the

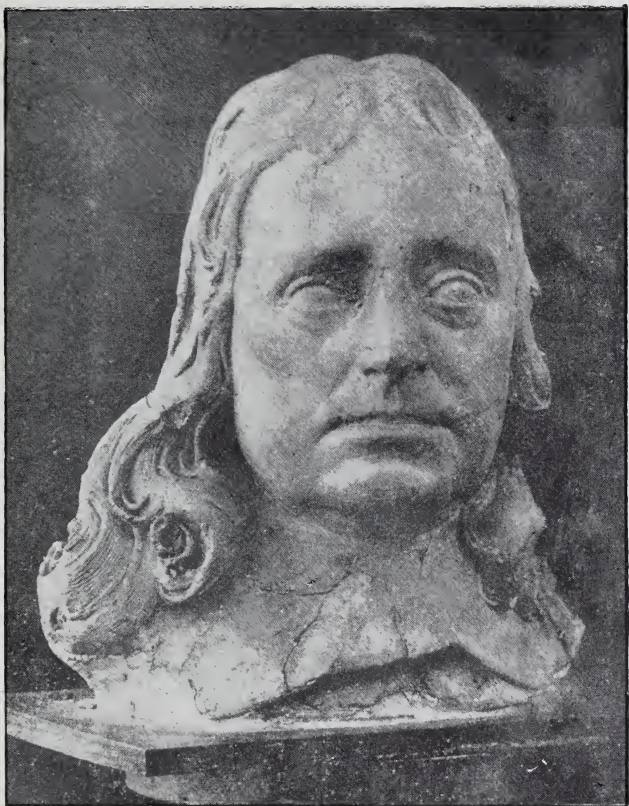
¹ 239 k 36 B. M.

abuses of the Episcopal system, than with the death of a young collegier; and many of its passages mark the first appearance of that sterner quality of patriotic Puritanism that presently was to be roused to such austere vehemence. Milton appears to have detected a strong Romeward movement in the English Episcopacy, and he used "Lycidas" as a means of denouncing what he considered a very serious crime. The two other notable works produced at Horton were "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," to which we shall refer more fully presently.

The poet's mother died in 1637 at Horton, and was buried in the chancel of the Church, where a plain blue stone still remains to mark the spot, and a very short time afterwards Milton left England for a visit to Italy. The house at Horton, where his brother Christopher afterwards lived, was pulled down in 1798, and the present Milton Manor is supposed to stand upon its site; the church, however, which the family attended for five years, still stands, and recalls this peaceful period in the poet's life; the last year of it disturbed by the worry of a lawsuit with Bower, the partner whom John Milton the elder had taken into his business, and in whose hands he had left the management when he retired to Horton. Milton, however, left the management of this difficulty in the hands of his father and brother, and started off on a long and tedious journey to Italy. It was a period of great men, and if we remember that Velazquez, Van Dyck, Rubens, Zurbaran, and Poussin were painting

at this time, and that Grotius and Descartes were the great philosophers of the period, and Calderon writing his dramatic verse, we can realize some of the attractions which European travel presented at the moment. Milton reached Paris in May, 1638, and was there introduced by Lord Scudamore to the scholar whom perhaps more than any one else in Europe he desired to see, the great Hugo Grotius, a man of profound learning. From thence he moved on to Pisa and to Florence. At the latter place he met Galileo, and remained for two months, went on to Rome, where he stayed a while, afterwards going to Siena and Naples, and returning to Rome. He took with him introductions to the chief Italian scholars, and was gladly received and made much of. We do not know how he expended his time, but probably a good deal of attention was given to visits to various academies, and to discussions upon questions of political or classical interest. He collected a good many books, wrote a number of Latin epigrams, and engaged in controversy with many scholars. He did not neglect one of his favourite studies, music, made the acquaintance of Cherubini, formed a collection of Italian works on music, paying more than one visit to the celebrated Academy of Music at Bologna. After he left Rome he went to Lucca, Verona, and Venice, and then rather suddenly deciding to return to England, he crossed the Alps to Geneva, made his way to Paris, and thence home, arriving in England in August, 1639.

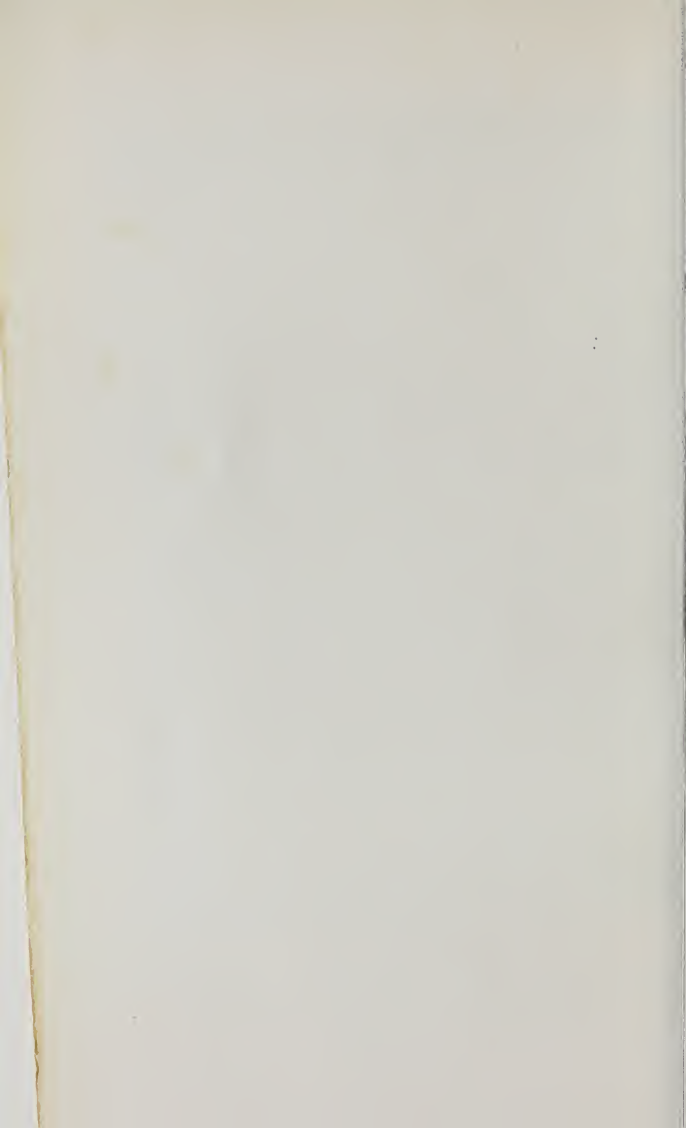
While in Geneva he heard of the death of his



JOHN MILTON.

From the clay bust in the Library of Christ's College, Cambridge.

(By permission of the Master.)



great friend, Charles Diodati, and gave utterance to the intense sadness of his feelings in the wonderful elegy which he entitled "*Epitaphium Damonis*." We may be allowed to express our entire concurrence with Pattison, who, in his *Memoir of Milton*, expresses regret that the poet should have chosen the Latin tongue for a work which, perhaps more than any other, reflects the pathetic emotions expressed in the wonderfully skilful passages which Milton knew so well how to use. His love for Diodati was very tender and true, and in this epitaph he allowed the affection which he bore for his friend to be revealed. The poet must have been a man of very austere and somewhat frigid character, possessing but little affection either for wife, child, or friend, and carefully keeping under control, and within the narrowest limits, all such sympathy or love. For his friend Diodati, however, he had conceived a very deep affection, and if only the Epitaph had been in English, and therefore accessible to the general reader, it would have probably been considered as an expression of the finest pathos of which the language could boast. It is interesting to notice, as Pattison was the first to point out, that this was the last attempt Milton made in serious Latin verse. Henceforward he wrote prose composition in the Classic tongue; but his appeals to his own people in poetry were written in his own language.

In July, 1639, the poet was again at Horton, but he left almost at once and came up to London, commencing his long, protracted residence

there. Even now he adopted no profession, and his father appears to have been ready to allow his clever son such means as he required for his sustenance. He took lodgings in St. Bride's Churchyard, at a tailor's shop, and there he commenced to educate his two nephews, who were the sons of his sister Anne, one of them being his godson. He must have been a somewhat strange tutor, and it would have been interesting had Edward Phillips, to whose work on his uncle we are indebted for so much information, given some details respecting the method adopted by the poet in teaching. Phillips did however lay great stress on the enormous quantity of learning which he and his brother had to accept, and upon the way in which the whole day was filled up with instruction, and that upon subjects of almost inconceivable variety.

Milton's residence in lodgings lasted a very short time; perhaps the situation was too noisy, but more probably the ever-increasing store of books drove him to find ampler accommodation, and he took a house in Aldersgate, outside the City walls, in 1640, and there settled down with the two lads. It was at this time that he commenced noting down various ideas and suggestions for the great poem which he intended to write; and the remarkable manuscript at Cambridge reveals to us the schemes for such a work that filled his head. Nearly one hundred different subjects are suggested, over sixty of them being more or less connected with Scripture, and the remainder based on history, almost exclusively

that of his own country. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the value of this wonderful manuscript, and when it is remembered that there is practically nothing remaining in the handwriting of Shakespeare, Chaucer, or Spenser, we may well be thankful that England possesses in the volume in Trinity College Library so important a record of Milton's work, and be grateful to the Syndics of the University Press for the perfect facsimile by which they have rendered it available to all students. Although, however, a hundred ideas were noted down, a very long time had to elapse before Milton was to perform the life work for which all the earlier part of his career was a preparation. One satisfaction in taking the house in Aldersgate was that he had as near neighbours his old teacher, Dr. Gill, and Dr. Diodati, the father of his dearest friend Charles, and as he was on the very edge of the country he was able quickly to get in to the fields and give up a considerable amount of time to contemplation. It was the period of the Long Parliament, and the political events had been stirring Milton to his depths, until he felt that the time had arrived when he must give utterance to his opinions.

In 1641 appeared his first tract "Of Reformation touching Church discipline in England, and the Causes that hitherto have hindered it,"¹ issued anonymously against Episcopacy, thundering out charges enunciated in no measured

¹ E 208 (3) B. M.

form, but concluding with a marvellous ode or prayer, of impassioned eloquence. He followed it the same year with a pamphlet on "Prelaticall Episcopacy,"¹ a tirade against Archbishop Usher, and then followed a tract against Bishop Hall,² issued in July, also anonymously. There is no doubt that Milton felt very strongly in respect to the bitter controversy which was going on between the Episcopal and the Puritan parties. The ill-judged levity and abuse, however, which fill these tracts, can hardly be excused. They are in parts quite ferocious, their personal abuse outrageous and magnificent as are many of the passages, they but serve to enlighten us concerning the extraordinary self-satisfaction, always an important factor in Milton's character, which rendered it almost impossible for him to believe that those who differed from him could by any possibility be right, and which led him so far to forget the laws of warfare, as to believe that personal abuse was a legitimate weapon to use. A little later on he amended and re-issued his first tract, calling it "The reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty";³ and to this appended an autobiographical chapter, in which he declared for Presbyterianism and talked of the necessity for his relinquishing poetry in order to make his attack upon prelacy. He had all his life taken himself exceedingly seriously, and it must be confessed that whatever came from the pen of the author of "Paradise Lost" deserves

¹ E 164 (19) B. M.

² E 134 (1) B. M.

³ E 137 (9) B. M.

attention; but the pages of indignation and contempt, and the torrent of violent and ill-mannered abuse, of which Milton was capable, serve but to make more startling the fact that a man who could thus write so violently was capable of the exquisite poetry which had been produced at Horton.

No student of Milton, however, can afford to pass by these early pamphlets. They do not reveal him in a pleasing light, but there are passages in them (as a rule at their conclusion) which are almost as magnificent as the ancient prophecies of the Bible. His "Apology against a pamphlet call'd a modest Confutation of the Animadversions,"¹ issued in 1642, is a piece of banter coupled with a certain nobly-serious statement of his own purity and self-respect.

Early in the summer of the following year Milton married. In doing this he seems to have taken all his friends by surprise, and it would almost appear as though he himself entered into the matrimonial state on a sudden impulse. The bridegroom was thirty-five years of age, his bride a girl of seventeen, the daughter of a country squire of strong Royalist sympathies who had many transactions with John Milton the elder. It has been suggested that a little while before this Milton had taken up arms, and seen some service in the field; and certain it is that on the 12th November, 1642, every able-bodied citizen was supposed to have turned out to oppose the

¹ E 147 (22) B. M.

march of the King, who had advanced to Brentford.

There is no evidence, however, to prove that Milton took part in the expedition. On the contrary, there is some ground for showing that he did not, and Pattison most definitely states that he cannot believe but that Milton on this occasion stayed at home. The suggestion as to his taking up arms was considered to account for his being in Oxfordshire where he found his bride, but there is no reason for making this suggestion beyond the fact that no one seems to have known why he suddenly left London, or why he remained away a month, and all were astonished when he brought back his wife with him, and some of her nearest relations.

We now enter upon the discussion of a very difficult problem. Mary Powell or Mary Milton as we must now call her, remained with her husband for one month only, and then, in July, she went home, promising to return in September. She remained away, however, for two years, and although Milton sent for her again and again, requiring her to return, she refused, and persuaded her relations to write and ask permission for her to remain away still longer.

An interesting literary question is here involved. Milton is said to have been so disgusted with the treatment he received from his wife that he seriously considered the question of divorce, and prepared his famous tract on the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." In it he argues that indisposition, unfitness, contrariety of mind,

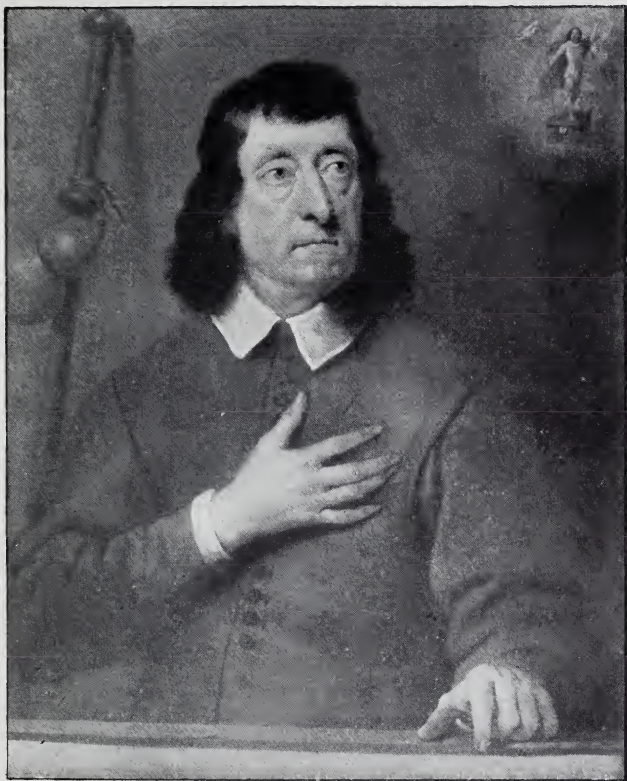
and even inability for fit conversation, constitute just causes for divorce, and in a most definite and dogmatic manner, writing entirely from the husband's point of view, he gives every reason why the man should take the necessary steps to rid himself of the unsuitable wife. It is a pamphlet marked by much intellectual courage, and by poetical genius, but it is wholly impracticable in the calm way in which it ignores the regulation of the home and domestic affairs, and scorns to deal with such matters as dowry, family, or maintenance. It is the work of a visionary, roused to a high pitch of feeling and utterly incapable of realizing that there might be another side to the question possessing equal importance.

Upon Mary Milton's shoulders have been placed the burden of this pamphlet, and those who support Milton in everything that he did, claim for him that her inability to comprehend the learning of her husband and the magnificence of his intellect was the cause of this tract. The investigations, however, of Professor Masson, respecting the date upon which the tract was issued, seem to make it quite possible that Milton had actually been considering the composition of this vehement argument during his very honeymoon. Certain it is that the copy of the first edition in the British Museum¹ is quite distinctly dated 1st August, 1643. We must confess that we have no definite date of Milton's mar-

¹ 12 GF 17 B. M.
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riage, Phillips, so circumstantial in most matters, having, curiously enough, omitted to supply this fact, and undoubtedly the enlarged edition of the book came out on the 2nd February, 1643-4,¹ after Mrs. Milton had refused to come home. It does, however, seem possible that the incompatibility of temper to which the poet referred in the tract, was discovered within the first few days of matrimony, and that forthwith this vehement and austere husband set to work to compose the startling pamphlet on divorce which might have been really dangerous had it not been for its hopeless impracticability. There is probably something to be said for Mary Milton, even in these early days. Whether the issue of these pamphlets was due to any action on her part, or to a want of sympathy between the bright and gay girl with strong Royalist attachments, and the grave, stern student, whose heart and soul were already with the Puritan movement, cannot be decided at this time; but whatever may have been their cause, the vehement protests created considerable excitement, and carried the question of a possibility of divorce between a man and his wife who did not suit one another, further than the author appears to have anticipated. They practically created a scandal. Milton's own party, at that time the Presbyterian, was supposed to repudiate him, and the Episcopal party was delighted at the

¹ 12 Ee 5 (E 31) B. M.
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JOHN MILTON.

From the painting by Pieter van der Plaas in the National Portrait Gallery.

possibility of a rupture, while certain disaffected persons were threatening to take the law into their own hands, and alter their domestic arrangements at their own free will.

The first treatise was succeeded by three others, "The judgment of Bucer concerning divorce,"¹ was issued on 15th July, 1544, followed in the next year by two pamphlets on the same subject, one called "Tetrachordon,"² and the other "Colasterion."³ Of these two the former was a heavy, learned treatise, the latter a most bitter and ferocious attack on his critics. In the meantime, however, Milton had been called in question for issuing unlicensed books, and his reply to the charge was a most characteristic one. On the 24th November, 1644, there appeared from his pen the pamphlet which he entitled "Areopagitica,"⁴ a speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing in England, one of the best known of his pamphlets. This was issued unlicensed and unregistered, and was a piece of most eloquent pleading for the liberty of the Press, courageous, courteous, and seasoned with that most rare quality in Milton's works, a sense of humour. For once he allowed his ability to write bitter invective to be held under serious check, contenting himself with scorn, but writing in far more courteous fashion than was his wont.

His tracts on divorce had, however, created the greater sensation, and were very much talked about, it being even suggested that Milton was

¹ 883 g 4 B. M.

² E 271 (12) B. M.

³ E 271 (11) B. M.

⁴ E 18 (9) B. M.

prepared to put into force the proposals made in the pamphlet, and his name was coupled first of all with that of Lady Margaret Ley, and then with that of Miss Davis. It is probable that it was all idle gossip, but meantime the condition of affairs for the Powell family had altered for the worse, and it was felt that Milton was on the gaining side, and that his influence might be useful. A reconciliation was accordingly arranged by mutual friends between Milton and his wife, and she was brought to London to a house where he frequently used to visit. A pathetic interview took place between the husband and wife, she pleading her youth, her inexperience, and the influence of her mother, and he, indifferent to excuses, only too ready to receive her back to his home. He not only did that, but very shortly afterwards, when the estate upon which she had lived, was taken possession of by the army, he received into his house almost every member of the Powell family, even including his wife's mother.

A little while before this, John Milton the elder had come to reside with his son. He had moved from Horton to Reading, but when the latter place was taken by the Parliamentary forces, he had come up to London. Milton meantime found his house in Aldersgate Street too small for him, he had taken more pupils to live with him, and he had issued (on 5th June, 1644) a remarkable pamphlet called a "Tractate on Education,"¹ in which in the form of a letter

¹ E 50 (12) B. M.

to Master S. Hartlib he had clearly set forth his ideas on the training of boys, and his idealistic theory as to the class of study to which their time should be devoted. Like his tracts on divorce, it was curiously impracticable, excellent in theory, but almost impossible to be carried out. It, however, received some attention, and probably led to an increase in the number of his pupils. An ampler residence was necessary, and Milton with his father moved to a house in the Barbican, not very far from where he had been residing, and it was to this place that he brought his wife and various members of the Powell family. Here it was that his first daughter, Anne, was born, and here both John Milton the elder, and Mrs. Milton's father, died.

By the time he had moved to the Barbican, he had ceased to be a Presbyterian, had become an Independent, and was one of the best known and most powerful controversialists of his day. He was not now, however, confining his attention to political pamphlets, but was looking over his early works in poetry with a view to the issue of some of them through the Press. The first volume of his poems¹ appeared in January, 1645-6, and had appended to it the first of the two portraits of the poet published during his lifetime. Unfortunately this portrait was a miserable piece of work, a most unsatisfactory engraving, and Milton supplied some Greek lines to be put underneath it which the

¹ E 1126 B. M.

unsuspecting engraver added in a tablet beneath, little aware of the meaning of the words he had engraved.

The verses may be translated as follows:

That an unskilful hand had carved this print
You'd say at once, seeing the living face;
But finding here no jot of me, my friends,
Laugh at the botching-artist's mis-attempt.

In 1647 Milton moved again, now taking a house in High Holborn, which had a back entrance into Lincoln's Inn Fields. His means by this time had probably become augmented owing to the decease of his father, and on leaving the Barbican he ceased to take pupils, and devoted his whole time to literary work.

In the following year his second daughter, Mary, was born, and in the early part of 1648 the poet appears to have definitely thrown the weight of his influence on to the side of the Republican party, and to have attached himself warmly to the advanced section of the Puritans. During the King's trial, he was at work upon his pamphlet called "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,"¹ which was issued on the 13th February, 1648-9, and clearly announced his strong attachment to the Regicide party. It was a courageous and very skilfully composed argument, but was not couched in so agreeable a literary style as had been the case with many of his preceding pamphlets. It marked, however, the turning-point in his career, and within a few

¹ E 542 (12) B. M.

weeks after its appearance he was waited upon by a deputation from the newly-created Council of State, offering him the position of Latin Secretary to the Council, and pressing him to accept a place in which his literary powers would be placed at the service of the State. His stipend was to be a sum of money, which in present currency would represent about a thousand a year, so highly were his services esteemed; and although even at this stage of his life his eyesight was beginning to fail him, he was nothing loth to accept the office, and was delighted to throw in his lot with the turbulent usurpers who were taking upon themselves to govern the country.

On the 20th March, 1648-9, Milton took office with the Council of the State, and his first Latin letter was addressed to the Senate at Hamburg, and dated 2nd April. In it he paraphrased the grand old Roman expression, and wrote his epistle as from *Senatus populusque Anglicanus*.

His work took him to Whitehall, and it was desirable that he should be in residence close at hand. He appears to have been promised apartments in Whitehall Palace, but until they were ready he took lodgings at Charing Cross close to Spring Gardens, where he remained for seven months, residing close to the place now occupied by the offices of the London County Council. Then he moved to Whitehall Palace, into rooms opening out of Scotland Yard, close to the Guard House, and there it was that his only son, John, was born.

A very few days after the death of Charles I there appeared that momentous work called "Eikon Basilike, the True Portraiture of His Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings." The first edition¹ appeared on 9th February, 1648-9, and was issued without license and bearing the name of neither printer nor publisher. It created a great sensation, and no less than fifty editions of it were produced in the year. If it had but appeared three weeks earlier it might have saved the King's life. It was seized upon by his supporters as a weapon of the strongest quality with which to attack the Council of State, and despite every effort to proscribe its issues no decree had the slightest effect in preventing edition after edition being turned out. It was firmly believed to have been the composition of the King himself, and it seems to be most probable from investigations made a few years ago, by Mr. Almack, and gathered up in his remarkable bibliography of "The King's Book," that the popular belief was the correct one, and that the bulk of the little volume was actually the work of Charles I, and is not to be attributed, as it was by his enemies, to Dr. Gauden. It appears to be at least certain that a considerable part of the materials for the book was prepared by the King. Perhaps no book ever issued in England created a greater sensation. It was read with the strongest emotion through the length and breadth of the kingdom, and it stirred

¹ E 1096 B. M.



JOHN MILTON AS A YOUNG MAN.

From the miniature by Samuel Cooper at Montagu House.

(By permission of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry.)

the feelings of the supporters of the throne to their very depths. The first edition had been issued with great haste, and one sheet of it (sheet G) was inaccurately numbered, while other succeeding editions came out with inaccuracies, as the volume had to be printed with the greatest secrecy, the Republican Government using every effort to suppress it. Editions were prepared in all sorts of sizes, from the very diminutive one which would go in the vest pocket, to the large quarto; and many of the books were bound in black leather adorned with mourning emblems, and having black edges. It was translated into many foreign languages, and was printed abroad as well as in England, and, as has been wisely said, "under the spell of its influence, the King became encircled with a halo of sanctity almost divine, Charles the Martyr becoming henceforth a kind of idealized personality, an incarnation of righteousness in affliction." The Council of State was greatly alarmed, as the influence of the book was tremendous, and a very determined effort had to be made to provide a reply to it. To Milton was given the commission, and on the 6th October, 1649, appeared his celebrated "*Εἰκονοκλαστική*."¹ The author made no effort in this book to veil his bitter antipathy towards the late King. He attacked him with a savage, direct personal condemnation, and no work of Milton's more clearly reveals the bitter condition of party

¹ E 578 (5) B. M.

warfare at that time, which enabled a man who certainly possessed a profound sense of justice, and deep down an underlying power of sympathy to blind his eyes so wilfully to the possibility of honesty or good faith in his opponent.

He was clever enough to detect in "The King's Book," the insertion in certain copies of the prayer of Pamela from Sydney's "Arcadia," and he made the best of this piece of plagiarism. His book was a fine piece of rhetorical statement, but sentiment cannot be confuted by logic, and the heart of the people beat too much in unison with the cause of the martyred King for John Milton to be able to counteract the wave of sympathy for the Stuart cause which was passing over the kingdom.

Immediately after the issue of "Iconoclastes," Milton had a new and important piece of work ready to hand. In November, 1649, Professor Salmasius, one of the most learned men in Europe, issued his book, entitled, "*Defensio Regia pro Carolo I.*," a work written in Latin at the request of Charles II in strong defence of the late King. Milton was set to work to answer it, and on 31st December, 1650, his reply was ready. It was entitled, "*Pro populo Anglicano defensio*,"¹ and was the most scurrilous book which had yet appeared from the hand of the poet. It gave Milton for the first time a Continental reputation, because it was a great surprise to foreign

¹ 8133 a 5 (1) B. M.

students to find that an Englishman was capable of attacking this valiant champion in a Latin treatise written as accurately, and as brilliantly as was the original work by Salmasius. It passed through at least nine editions, but it is probable that neither of the books did much good to the causes for which their authors were contending. They were brilliant rhetorical efforts, no doubt, and the book by Salmasius was a work of profound learning, and serious argument, albeit so heavy that it was comparatively little read. On the other hand, Milton's reply was so full of personal abuse that its value was largely diminished. It was looked upon merely as an ingenious and passionate retort. It is probable that at this time the phrase in which the lawyer acting for the Powell family summed up the character of Milton was a true one, when he called him "a harsh and choleric man." Milton had become so strenuous a political adversary that it is not easy to recognize in his Council of State pamphlets the same author who earlier in his career had penned the exquisite pathos of "Lycidas," or the graceful melody of "Il Penseroso."

In 1651, the poet moved to Petty France (now called York Street), near Bird Cage Walk, and here it was that in 1652 his third daughter, Deborah, was born. Shortly afterwards Mary Milton passed away at the early age of twenty-six, after nine years of married life, leaving behind her three motherless girls, and the infant boy, who soon after followed her to the grave. By this time the long anticipated trouble which

had been hanging over the head of Milton for so many years had fallen, and the Latin Secretary to the Council of State, whose eyesight had been growing weaker year by year, now became totally blind. Cromwell had become Lord Protector, but Milton had retained a position with the Council in the form of an extra Secretaryship. His last work before blindness supervened was his "Second defence of the English people,"¹ which, written in Latin, came out in May, 1654. It was the reply to a strong Royalist attack called "The cry of the King's blood to Heaven," in which Milton's own habit of personal abuse had been taken up by the anonymous author of the book, and a perfect torrent of scurrility poured upon the English-Latin scholar. Milton returned to the attack in this second defence with extraordinary effect, the books containing some of his most magnificent sentences, while his Latin was grandiloquent and overpowering in its majesty. The sentences, however, dealt with the most trivial matters, and in this work Milton set himself to demolish a creature of his own fancy, and allowed his rage towards his opponent whom he proclaims as one Morus to blind him to all sense of proportion. The work has, however, considerable interest from the fact that it is full of autobiographical passages, and it is further remarkable for the overwhelming flattery which it gives to Oliver Cromwell, and for the manner in which it praises the doings of Fairfax and Bradshaw.

¹ 599 a 23 B. M.

Into the long controversy as to whether Morus ever wrote "The cry of the King's blood," as Milton seriously stated he did, we need not enter. It is quite clear now that Morus was not the author, but that the treatise was written by one Peter de Moulin, and Morus only edited it, and wrote the preface for it. Whether Milton knew this, as Morus said, is not clear, but it seems to be possible that towards the latter part of the controversy the fact was really known to the poet, although in the pamphlet "*Pro se defensio*"¹ Milton returned again to his original charge, declining to let slip an opportunity of attacking Morus whom he so thoroughly hated.

The controversy did not finish with this second defence, one or two other pamphlets followed, but Salmasius was dead, and Milton was turning his attention to matters of greater moment.

In 1654 the massacre of the Waldenses took place, and aroused a great deal of feeling in England. A sum of money which would be equivalent in modern currency to nearly £140,000 was raised in England for the persecuted people, and a strong letter was addressed by Cromwell through his Latin Secretary to the Duke of Savoy. It was one of those acts of interference with foreign affairs of which England has too often been guilty, but it showed the Duke that the sympathy of another nation was with the people whom he was persecuting, and probably rather to the disappointment of Cromwell, the

¹ E 1661 (2).

Duke stopped the persecution and pardoned the political offences of these people, when all need for interference came to an end.

English literature was distinctly the gainer by reason of the persecution, as Milton's sonnet on the Piedmont massacre is one of his most stately poems.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose
bones

Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and
stones,

Forget not; in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their
moans

The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes
sow

O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

In 1655 the salary Milton had been receiving as Secretary of the Council was considerably reduced, probably because his blindness prevented him from fulfilling the full duties of the office. An effort to pension him off failed, as it was clear that in mental energy the Latin Secretary was still as powerful as ever. At home

Εν ἀδελφείᾳ τελεῖσθαι

Doctissimo Viri, meoq. fautori humanissimo,
D. Christophoro Arnoldo cede hoc, in memo-
riam cum sua virtutis, tum mei erga se studij.
Londini. An: D. 1651. Novem: 19.

Joannes Miltonius.

SIGNATURE OF JOHN MILTON.

From the Album Amicorum of Christopher Arnold, Professor of History at Nuremberg.
(*British Museum.*)

things were not in a satisfactory condition; the duties of the State had taken up a good deal of time, and the three motherless daughters required some one to look after them. On the 12th November, 1656, Milton married a second time, one Catherine Woodcock, the daughter of a Captain Woodcock of Hackney, and for fifteen months peace reigned in the home. A little daughter arrived on the 19th October, 1657, but both wife and child died in February, 1658, and Milton was once more alone.

In 1659 he issued his "Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes,"¹ and in the same year a tract entitled "Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church,"² a strong attack upon the Establishment, in which Milton made no secret of his desire to see the union between the Church and the State dissolved, and in which he urged that no payment whatever from State funds should be made for religious work of any kind. This was followed in 1660 by his "Ready and Easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth,"³ and that, and a tract against a sermon by Dr. Grif-fiths,⁴ were the last pamphlets issued by Milton before the Restoration.

He had been Latin Secretary for Richard Cromwell after the decease of the Protector, and had continued in office during the time of the Republic that followed the resignation of Oliver's son, but the times were ripening for a change of

¹ 1019 b 18 B. M.

² E 2110 (2) B. M.

³ E 1016 (11) B. M.

⁴ E 1021 (13) B. M.

government, and Charles II was on his way to take the crown.

For eleven years the poet had held his State position, and written numberless State documents and letters, but now a great change was to take place, and English literature was to gain some of its greatest treasures from the blind old man. He had spoken sweetly in his final Sonnet of his second wife:

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

Methought I saw my late espousèd saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.

Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint

Purification in the old Law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.

Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear as in no face with more delight.

But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

He had written his last Latin letter dated 16th May, 1659, and then he sent away his daughters to some friend's house, and, raising £400, disappeared from view, taking refuge in a quaint old house in St. Bartholomew's Close, while on the 29th May, 1660, Charles II came to the

throne, and the political movement for which Milton had given his best energies and the ripest years of his life, was at an end.

His great masterpiece, "Paradise Lost," had just been commenced, its first few lines dictated to one of his daughters, and then the blind man had to slip away into a labyrinth of courts and tortuous passages, in which he could hide until the storm of enthusiasm for the Restoration had spent its first energy.

If his "Ready and Easy Way" be carefully examined, it will be clear that not only did he not expect the Restoration to take place, but even stoutly refused to believe in the possibility of such an occurrence. That the principles for which he fought could ever be overturned seemed to him inconceivable, and as his physical vision was blinded, so he blinded his mental outlook in his determination to disbelieve in the quickly approaching Restoration. The times were, however, changing rapidly, that which Milton deemed impossible had actually arrived, and the King had been joyfully received by the people of the country, who were weary of the internecine conflict, and of the dreary austerity which had ruled their lives. The pendulum, of course, swung to the opposite extreme, and under the new *régime* there was the greatest activity in searching out those who had been connected with the last government, and punishing them.

It is an historical puzzle how Milton escaped in the general imprisonment of the leaders of the Commonwealth Government. It has been said

that Sir William Davenant, the Poet Laureate, had escaped from imprisonment in 1650 through the instrumentality of John Milton, and that now he was very glad to repay the debt of gratitude he owed the poet. His exemption from the vengeance that overtook so many of his friends has been also attributed to Andrew Marvell, and it is said that the assistance of Sir Thomas Clarges was invoked; but may it not be accepted that the high literary capacity of the Latin Secretary had something to do with his escape, and that perhaps an even stronger reason was his blindness. Whatever may have been the cause, Milton, who had been so valiant a servant to the Commonwealth, did not suffer very seriously under the Restoration, and one would fain believe that his nobility of mind and great literary skill had something to do with his escape. He remained in hiding for nearly four months, during which time his "Iconoclastes," and his book against Salmasius were called in by the Royal Proclamation of 16th August, 1660. For a while, in 1660, he was in the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, and during that period the regicides were executed, and the two books burnt in public by the common hangman. In December, however, he was released on payment of certain fees, and when the Act of Indemnity was passed, he emerged from custody, and went to reside in a little house on the north side of Holborn, near to Red Lion Square. Just at that time the posthumous reply by Salmasius to Milton's second defence came out. The times

John Milton was born the 9th of December
1608 die Venens half an hour after 6 in the
morning

Christopher Milton was born on Friday about
a month before Christmas at 5 in the morning
1615

Edward Phillips was 15 year old August 1645
John Phillips is a year younger about 1646.

My daughter Anne was born July the 29th
on the first at evening about half an hour
after Six 1646

My daughter Mary was born on Wednesday
6 a clock 1648

6 a clock 1648.

My son John was born on Sunday March the 16th about half an hower past nine at night 1650

My daughter Deborah was born the 2d of May being Sunday somewhat before 3 of the clock in the morning. 1652.

~~My~~ my wife her mother dyed about 3 days after. And my son about 6 weeks after his mothers

Katherin my daughter by Katherin my second wife, was borne y. 19. E of October between 5 and 6 in y. mornings and dyed y. 17. E of March following. 6 weeks after his mother, who dyed y. 3. E of Feb. 1657

had altered, however, and Milton, much as he would have liked to do so, could take no notice of the book.

In the following year the blind old man went back again to that part of London where he had commenced his married life, taking a house in Jewin Street, close to Aldersgate, quite near to where his father had been buried. It was a sadly altered man who came back to the City; he had certainly escaped with his life, but he had lost his sight, and the greater part of his means. With the loss of his Latin Secretaryship his substantial stipend had disappeared, and some of his investments, said Phillips, having been placed in securities guaranteed by the Commonwealth Government, were lost, as the Monarchy refused to recognize any such obligation. Other property had also disappeared in the change of Government, and a few years later he was to lose by fire his house in Bread Street, where he had been born. Added to all this, he had seen swept away in a moment the political edifice in the erection of which he had worked so hard, and he knew that the principles for which he had contended were now being treated with contempt, and England had gone back to the acceptance of ideas which he considered little short of criminal.

His home life, also, was not satisfactory. He had been too self-absorbed to give proper attention to the education of his daughters. He had refused to allow them to be taught any other language but their own, although he had insisted

upon their reading aloud to him books in half-a-dozen different tongues, and the effort of reading books which they did not understand, and of transcribing for him pamphlets in which they took no interest, and poems beyond their comprehension, had turned what might have been a pleasure into a very grievous and irksome task. His eldest girl was lame, and had a defect of speech. She hated her home, and was entirely out of sympathy with her stern and learned father. She had but little society, and that only composed of the ardent political enthusiasts who came to see her father, and spent their whole time in discussing political events, or in talking of Baxter, Evelyn, Jeremy Taylor, Fox, Samuel Butler or Cowley, the men whose careers would interest the blind poet. The work of looking after their father fell mainly to the other two daughters, Mary and Deborah, as little by little the eldest daughter drew out from home duties, and found her pleasures and occupations in other ways; and even these two younger ones seemed to have served him grudgingly. They also found their home life very dull; they had only servants for their companions, and their father had never shown them much affection, or received much from them in return. Some change had to take place, and so on the recommendation of a friend, Milton got married for the third time.

His marriage to Elizabeth Minshull took place on the 26th February, 1662, at the Church of St. Mary Aldermary, when the bride was but twenty-four years of age. We are told that she

was of a peaceful and agreeable temper, that she had golden hair and could sing, and she certainly proved an excellent wife, looked well after her husband, and brought peace and comfort into a very discordant household. The eldest daughter, who had quite frankly expressed her wish to hear of her father's decease, left home for a while, but during the remaining years of Milton's life his domestic happiness was secure, and he became deeply attached to the wife whom he never saw, and left to her at his death all his available property.

On the occasion of his third marriage he moved again, this time settling down in Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields, where he spent the remainder of his life, with the exception of a short period passed at Chalfont St. Giles during the time of the Plague. The house in Artillery Walk had a good garden attached to it, and was in a quiet situation. Milton always took care to secure a garden wherever he resided, so that he could walk up and down in the open air free from intrusion.

Now at length he was able to settle down to his great life work. The neglect of his daughters was at an end; they no longer sold his books without his knowledge, pilfered his small means, or rebelled against assisting him. His wife and the youngest girl devotedly waited on him for some time, and then in about 1670, when the dissatisfaction of his daughters with the stern arrangements of the home had come to a head, and all three had left him in order to learn em-

broidery work, and sustain themselves in that occupation, Mrs. Milton appears to have been his amanuensis, and to have sung to him when he could not write, while a succession of friends came in to read to him in various languages, and to take down the words from his lips.

As we have seen, he had been confident all through his life that he was to accomplish a great literary work, and before he had to flee from London on account of the Plague, the chief part of it had been accomplished. "Paradise Lost" was ready during 1665-6, and when Milton was at Chalfont he was able to show to his friend Ellwood, who had engaged a little house for him in the country, the finished poem, and received from him the advice to write a companion poem on "Paradise Found."

The month of March, 1666, saw Milton back in London, and then it was that his birthplace was destroyed by the Great Fire which crept up within half a mile of his house in Artillery Walk.

On the 27th March, 1667, a famous agreement was entered into between Samuel Simons, the printer, and John Milton, gentleman, for the issue to the public of "Paradise Lost." This precious agreement is still in existence, preserved in the British Museum, and by it the author was to receive £5 down, a second similar sum when the second edition was sold, and a third and fourth on the sale of the third and fourth editions. He received his first payment, and his second, and then the poet was dead. The idea conceived away back in 1640 had at

length come to fruition, and at the age of fifty-nine Milton saw his great work issued to the public.¹ It was entitled "Paradise Lost. A Poem. Written in ten books. By John Milton, 1667." It was produced at three shillings, a sum equivalent now to about half a guinea, and there were various issues of the first edition. The author's name at first appeared in full, and then his initials only. A preface was put into one issue² to assist the reader, and then an Argument to explain the idea of the poet. A later issue contained a very ungrammatical preface written by the printer, and this was followed by a more carefully drawn up preface, the work of Milton himself. By April, 1669, the first edition had been exhausted, and the second was issued. "Paradise Regained"³ came out in 1671, and the sacred drama of "Samson Agonistes," to the consideration of which a separate chapter is allotted in this book, was united with it in the same volume. Meantime, however, a couple of prose writings had been published. The first was a Latin Grammar,⁴ of which not much need be said, as the work was unimportant, and only illustrated the versatility of an author, who in midst of composing the most sublime poetry, could give his attention to the publication of a school book, which he had commenced many years before. The other, a mere fragment, was a portion of a history of Britain⁵ down to Nor-

¹ C 14 a 9 B. M.² C 14 a 10 B. M³ 684 d 33 B. M.⁴ 12935 a 30.⁵ 598 e 1 B. M.

man times, but it had attached to it an excellent engraved portrait of John Milton, after Faithorne's crayon sketch.

At this time the poet was described as a gouty old man, fond of music, fond of walking, a good talker, a man who smoked of an evening, and one who, having been in turn attached to various religious bodies, had settled down in his blindness to belong to no religious community whatever, attending no place of religious worship, but adopting a sort of Quaker-like religion, with very limited ideas of toleration. His principle of toleration was agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and with those who made the Bible their sole rule, interpreting it as they themselves thought fit, Milton had full sympathy, extending it even to Arians and Socinians; but to those who taught through a church, who believed in tradition, or who accepted Patristic theology, Milton had scanty sympathy, and for the adherents of the Catholic Church, none at all. Prelacy he disliked, but Catholics he hated, and definitely excluded them from any chance whatever of being right. All this he laid down quite definitely in his last prose pamphlet, "A Treatise on True Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration, and what best Means may be used against the Growth of Popery,"¹ a somewhat tame production, marked by little of his former brilliance, or stately diction, but interesting as affording an insight into his own mind.

¹ E 1958 (19) B. M.

In his early life he had the reputation of possessing good looks, and, as already stated, the nickname of the Lady of Christ's was partly due to the qualities of his face, and to the beauty of his brown hair which he wore long over the shoulders. His eyes in early days were quick and clear, in evidence of which we know that he was an expert fencer, and it seems probable that the loss of sight had not altogether destroyed the charm of his appearance, as those who have described to us how he looked in later days speak of the pleasing expression, which redeemed the stern aspect of his countenance.

Of the latest prose works of Milton, there is no need to say much. He brought out his Latin treatise on the art of logic in 1672,¹ following it with the treatise on religion, just referred to, and in 1674, he issued his Latin familiar letters, copies of which he had always carefully kept, and added to them some early productions in the same language written when at college, of which he was a little unduly proud.² A tract on the succession of the King of Poland was his last important work,³ although he left behind him preparations for the composition of a Latin Lexicon, and the fragment of what would have been an interesting work on geography, but which had only extended so far as a treatise on Russia,⁴ and which was printed in 1682. He asked permission to publish his State letters, which he had written when Latin Secretary to

¹ 1134 a 5 B. M.

³ E 1959 (3) B. M.

² 1083 h 7 B. M.

⁴ 1049 c 2 (1) B. M.

the Council of State, but the permission was refused, and it was some time after his death before any of these letters were rendered available to the student by copies made at the State Paper Office and published in 1694.¹ His wants towards the last few years of his life were few, and fortunately he was able to supply them, although to do so he appears to have sold the greater part of his library. He spent a good deal of his time preparing his books for the press, and issuing fresh editions of his minor poems, dictating what he desired to those about him. His wife, of whom we know very little, looked well after him, and we are told that he was fond of sitting in the sun at the door of his house, facing the open ground opposite, and there receiving his visitors. He suffered from gout, but fortunately it was mainly confined to his hands and fingers, which were marked with chalk stones. He took a good deal of exercise, walking in the garden, or swinging in a machine which he had had made for the purpose, and his chief recreation, besides literature and conversation, was music. He played the organ and bass viol, and had a good voice. His method of posture was rather a curious one, as we are told he generally sat obliquely in an elbow chair with his leg thrown over the arm.

On Sunday, 8th November, 1674, he died, within a month of being sixty-six years of age. He was buried in St. Giles, Cripplegate, in the

¹ 599 b 15 B. M.

City of London. His widow left London in 1681, and moved to Nantwich, where she lived for many years, dying in 1727, at the advanced age of eighty-nine, and cherishing with the utmost reverence various relics of her great husband, and books which had belonged to him.

Of the three daughters, the eldest, Anne, married and died in child-birth, 1678; the second, Mary, died unmarried, some time before 1694, and the Milton family was perpetuated by the third daughter only. This was Deborah, who married a weaver in Spitalfields named Clarke, and had ten children, dying in 1727, at the age of seventy-six. Her son became a weaver also, and one daughter married a man of the same occupation. A long time after her father's death she was discovered in a state of penury by some enthusiastic students of Milton's works, and she was assisted by a fund raised for the purpose, to which Queen Caroline, Addison, and Vertue were subscribers. Milton's brother, Sir Christopher, returned to the faith of his grandfather, was knighted, became Chief Justice of Common Pleas, and died in 1692, at the age of seventy-seven.

MILTON'S PROSE WORKS

A CONSIDERABLE number of tracts which constitute the bulk of Milton's prose works have been referred to in the preceding chapter. There are but few of his productions in this form which will be attractive to the ordinary English reader. Their interest is now mainly due to the fact that *he* wrote them, and that they throw light upon the stirring movements of his tumultuous times. They are, as a whole, strongly aggressive, written in an intensely partisan spirit, and many of them are crowded with personal abuse. They generally set at naught, as has been wisely said, "every dictate of good taste and controversial fairness," but the extraordinary feature of them is the ability of the author to turn suddenly from an acrimonious and surly attack upon an opponent, in which petulant language appears in every paragraph, to some magnificent utterance full of devotional spirit, and almost sublime in its imagery. This quality no other writer of the time possessed. Milton was like every other pamphleteer, when he appeared as the infuriated champion, full of angry vituperation; but he stood alone in the passages of lucid eloquence to which he would

occasionally rise, and which were, as a rule, inspired by some thought which appealed to his spiritual nature, and sent him off in a torrent of impassioned language. A prose Ode in favour of Prayer, which appears at the close of his tract on "Church Discipline,"¹ 1641, is a striking instance of this versatility of the author. It is really a sublime appeal to God to defend the right, and is like the utterance of an Old Testament Prophet, while the contrast between this portion of the pamphlet and the indignant contempt and abusive epithets which precede it, is marked and startling.

The only one of the tracts having little of the pamphleteer about it, and written with calm dignity, is the "Areopagitica,"² 1644, a piece of careful reasoning in favour of the liberty of the Press, in which the cause of freedom of thought and freedom of utterance, is stated in thoughtful deliberate language, and in simple style marked by occasional touches of humour. Milton's idea was that the Press should be quite free, but the author of each work held responsible for any evils he may promulgate. He pointed out that if nothing was issued but what Civil authority had previously approved, power would always be the standard of truth, but he declined to accept the popular notion that there can be no settlement if every dreamer of innovations may promulgate his projects, no peace if every murmurer at Government may diffuse discontent,

¹ E 208 (3) B. M.

² E 18 (9) B. M.

and no religion if every sceptic may teach folly; believing emphatically in the triumph of right, and allowing the publication of all opinions free and unrestrained.

The following is a typical passage from "Areopagitica."

And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burthen to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for want of which whole nations fare worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men;—how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and, if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself,—*slays an immortality rather than a life.*

In many places this book is salted by pungent wit, but in Milton's other prose works his wit takes more the form of teasing his opponent, and stinging him by caustic remarks. It is to be feared that some of Milton's opposition to the

Monarchy arose from a dislike to obey *any* authority, and his political pamphlets are marked by a sullen desire for independence, and a predominant wish to destroy rather than to establish. His domestic relations show that he was a severe and arbitrary man; his political work emphasizes this side of his character, but we owe a good deal in the present day to the strenuous supporters of liberty, of which Milton was so typical an example, and whether agreeing or disagreeing with the contentions for which he fought, we are grateful for the stern determination which enabled him to arouse and contend for the spirit of liberty, while no theory respecting the aim of his writings must ever be allowed to blind our eyes to the magnificent use of the English language for which Milton was pre-eminently remarkable. Professor Masterman wisely points out that although he is an arch offender in the matter of long and involved sentences,¹ defying all rules of grammatical construction, and although at times his prose is dull and colourless, and at other times scurrilously abusive, yet there are passages which are sublime in their ornate splendour and stately rhythm, and unsurpassed in the prose works of any age.

Pattison considers, however, that the great and special feature of Milton's prose works is the fact that through the whole series of them runs the redeeming characteristic that they are all written on the side of liberty. It may be

¹ There is one of 39 lines containing 336 words.

religious liberty, or civil, or domestic, or the liberty of the Press, or the liberty of the conscience, but liberty is the main spirit that distinguishes them. This is none the less true of the tracts on divorce than the political tracts, and Milton's dislike of restraint binding his domestic relations was no less emphatic than his hatred of certain political regulations. The curious feature, however, of the tracts on divorce, is the absolute inability of the author to conceive the converse of his arguments. They were entirely written from the man's point of view, and he treats the woman as a subordinate and inferior being. Woman was, he declared, made only for obedience, and this very unsatisfactory and most dangerous doctrine he carried out to a logical extreme in his own household, with the result that his daughters rebelled against him, his first wife pined away, and his home life was very largely of an unhappy character. The spirit of the age was, to a certain extent, with him, and woman, in the Stuart times, had not attained to the position of dignity to which she was by right entitled. One would, however, have anticipated from Milton, a man so much in advance of the times in many respects, a better understanding of the rights of womanhood, but he was quite unable to grant either by right, or through the virtue of chivalry, that position to the wife in the household to which she is entitled.

His tracts carried with them their own protests for the liberty of the Press, for, as a rule, they were issued unlicensed, and unregistered, and

whatever may have been the faults in their conception, they had about them a breezy fearlessness, no matter what the topic was to which they alluded.

As a further example of Milton's prose work, it may be well to give an extract or two from his tract on "Education." It was a quarto pamphlet of eight pages, taking the form of a letter addressed to Samuel Hartlib, a German philosopher who had settled in England.¹ The tract was issued in 1644, and although of a somewhat impracticable and visionary character, it deals in passages of real eloquence with the question of education. Milton's strong belief in himself and his theories, however visionary, led him to speak querulously of the systems of education then in vogue, and those under which he had been brought up, whether at school or college, were not spared in his contemptuous language.

He laid down certain regulations for the training of boys between twelve and one-and-twenty, and with his definition of what education is to be, few persons can have any quarrel. "I call, therefore," says he, "a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war." When it comes, however, to the details of this education we find him adopting the very plan against which he declaims, and which he himself used with his own pupils, that of filling up their time so com-

¹ E 50 (12) B. M.

pletely with work that there was no leisure left, and overloading them with the study of an enormously long series of authors. He was quite aware of the failures a University education often produces, had a proper sense of the small results attained at such considerable cost of time and labour, and pronounced strongly against the customary method of teaching languages, but his own remedies for the disease were as objectionable as the disease they were supposed to cure, and such remedies as possessed greater wisdom were quite impossible ones to carry out.

The following extracts will give an idea of the stately prose in which this tract is written, and of the methods that Milton suggested for the education of the lads submitted to his care.

The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection. But because our understanding cannot in this body find itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in all discreet teaching.

* * * * *

For their studies: first, they should begin with the chief and necessary rules of some good grammar, either that now used, or any better; and while this is doing, their speech is to be fashioned to a distinct and clear pronunciation, as near as may be to the

Italian, especially in the vowels. For we Englishmen being far northerly, do not open our mouths in the cold air wide enough to grace a southern tongue ; but are observed by all other nations to speak exceedingly close and inward, so that to smatter Latin with an English mouth, is as ill a hearing as law French. Next, to make them expert in the usefulest points of grammar, and withal to season them and win them early to the love of virtue and true labour, ere any flattering seducement or vain principle seize them wandering, some easy and delightful book of education would be read to them, whereof the Greeks have store, as Cebes, Plutarch, and other Socratic discourses. But in Latin we have none of classic authority extant, except the two or three first books of Quintilian, and some select pieces elsewhere.

* * * * *

The next removal must be to the study of politics ; to know the beginning, end, and reasons of political societies ; that they may not, in a dangerous fit of the commonwealth, be such poor, shaken, uncertain reeds, of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counsellors have lately shewn themselves, but steadfast pillars of the state. After this, they are to dive into the grounds of law, and legal justice ; delivered first and with best warrant by Moses ; and as far as human prudence can be trusted, in those extolled remains of Grecian lawgivers, Lycurgus, Solon, Zaleucus, Charondas, and thence to all the Roman edicts and tables with their Justinians, and so down to the Saxon and common laws of England, and the statutes.

Sundays also and every evening may be now understandingly spent in the highest matters of theology, and church history, ancient and modern ; and ere this time the Hebrew tongue at a set hour

might have been gained, that the scriptures may be now read in their own original; whereto it would be no impossibility to add the Chaldee and the Syrian dialect. When all these employments are well conquered, then will the choice histories, heroic poems, and Attic tragedies of stateliest and most regal argument, with all the famous political orations, offer themselves; which if they were not only read, but some of them got by memory, and solemnly pronounced with right accent and grace, as might be taught, would endue them even with the spirit and vigour of Demosthenes or Cicero, Euripides or Sophocles.

In Milton's Latin works the classical allusions and the highly wrought imagery are often seriously overdone, but no man wrote Latin with equal ease in those days, and there is a compression of strength about his sentences characteristic of the greatest classical writers, and astonishing as the work of an Englishman; while for pathos, despite all Dr. Johnson's clever criticism, there are passages unequalled in their touching sympathy. For all his knowledge of Latin, so remarkable in its perfection, there was, however, a certain clumsiness in construction that Milton seldom avoided, and this is the characteristic which specially belongs to all his prose, whether in Latin or English, since little that he wrote can be said to be marked with grace, or distinguished by either suavity or serenity. There is often an exotic quality in his language, the result of his using Latin construction in English sentences and *vice versa*.

MILTON'S POETICAL WORKS

THE poetical works of John Milton fall naturally into four groups. His work at Cambridge, notably the "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and the "Sonnet on Shakespeare"—the poems written at Horton, especially "Arcades," "Comus," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Lycidas"—the sonnets composed during the times of the Civil War; and—his final great poetic works of the Restoration, "Paradise Lost," "Paradise Regained," and "Samson Agonistes." There is a curious connection between the first and the last of these four periods, for there is a closer resemblance between the poems composed at Cambridge and those written after Milton had become blind, than between any other sections of his poetry. The lofty conceptions of "Paradise Lost" and the sublime language, with its wealth of classical allusion find their prelude in the "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," which Hallam calls "perhaps the finest in the English language," and Landor speaks of as "incomparably the noblest piece of lyric poetry I am cognisant with." There is a grandeur in composition, and an exquisite sense of melody about the Ode which prepare us for the more sublime effort of

“Paradise Lost,” but, as is natural, there are considerable evidences of labour in the poetry written at Cambridge, careful elaboration and diligent polishing quite different from the more spontaneous diction of the later poems. The Cambridge poems show evidence of the magnificent scholarship of their author, and of his ability to use the English tongue even at that early age, as a noble-toned instrument on which he could produce effects both sublime and profound: but they also mark the period of preparation during which Milton was feeling his way in the use of his instrument, and was devoting such evident pains to the method as in some cases to endanger the spirit of the composition.

In “Comus,” pastoralism takes the highest and most dramatic form of which it is capable, and Milton hardly ever wrote anything in poetry more truly poetical than this masque. Elegance is the phrase which more accurately describes it than any other, and the disputation between the lady and Comus is the most important scene in the drama. Unfortunately, Milton could never avoid moralizing, and his speech in favour of chastity is far finer than are the recommendations to pleasure which he puts into the mouth of Comus. The pleasure he describes is hardly made attractive, it could scarcely have enkindled the austere spirit of the author himself, and to the man of ordinary susceptibilities it would, as presented in his poetry, have had very little more fascination. He was dealing with a subject in which a luxuriance of ornate language

might have been justifiable, but he treats it entirely in a poetic manner, wrapping up his phrases in a certain cold elegance having about it no sprightliness and little passion. From the purely dramatic point of view the work has many faults, and in some parts is undoubtedly tedious, but "Comus" gives us a good understanding of the view of nature which Milton was able to take, of the extent of his familiarity with the authors he had been studying, and of the vigour of his sentiments respecting the defence of virtue viewed in the most poetic manner.

In "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" we have still more delightful examples of the manner in which Milton had perceived the beauties of nature, and of the enthusiastic life of a student who discovers on all hands episodes which recall to him classical allusions and people the surroundings of his out-of-door life with the visions and stories of classic lore. The twin poems form a series of descriptions of the gradual advance of day or night, "L'Allegro" taking us from sunrise to night, "Il Penseroso" from night till vespers. The melody of the poem is well represented by the following lines:

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
And love the high-embowered roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light:
There, let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,

In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

To "Lycidas" some reference has already been made, and few things are more curious to notice than the inability of Dr. Johnson, when studying the works of Milton, to discern the pathos which lies deep down in this remarkable poem. He speaks of its diction as rough, of its rhymes as uncertain, and of its passion as running upon remote allusions and obscure opinions. There is no doubt that "Lycidas" is obscure, purposely so, and in this poem the author was endeavouring to reveal a suppressed passion, burning in his own breast, which was to a certain extent inarticulate. Pattison says that in "Lycidas" "we have reached the high-water mark of English poetry," and although this may perhaps seem exaggerated praise, yet in this remark he is far nearer to the truth than were the words of Johnson, when he criticized it for its inherent improbability and condemned it for its allegorical composition. It marks the first sign of the deep passion of patriotism which thrilled the utterances of Milton. Although the fanaticism of the Puritan is seen to be clearly emerging from the unsettled state of Milton's opinions, it is not yet allowed its full play, and his mind is so completely charged with the spirit of the humanities that he can only give utterance to the words of this newer voice of patriotism rising up within him in phrases which are recondite and

somewhat enigmatical. "Lycidas" has to be viewed not so much for itself, as because it was the prelude to the political pamphlets, and eventually to the storm of impassioned eloquence which characterized the patriotic passages of "Paradise Lost." As an example, however, of the charm of this wonderful poem let the following lines be quoted:

Weep no more, woeful shepherds! weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor;
So sinks the day-star in the ocean-bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore,
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
—So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the
 waves;
Where other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

It may be well to refer here briefly to the serious charge which has been brought against Milton of a want of originality in his poetic art, and the very wise words of Professor Courthope may be quoted. "Originality in art," says Courthope, "consists in imprinting upon ideas, whencesoever derived, the form and character of a freshly conceiving mind." "To illustrate and

adorn a creative conception," he adds, "independently imagined, a poet is at complete liberty to make use of the thoughts bequeathed to the world by his predecessors, nor is he under any obligation to tell the reader that at this point and that, his imagination was inspired by something he had read."

Thought-assimilation is put by Milton in a new and striking light, and when one comes to consider the great poetic works of his later years one has to bear well in mind the consideration of what Courthope makes clear in these words. That "*Paradise Lost*," that stupendous monument of genius, and vast weight of imagination and learning is full of allusions to other poetic works, and of ideas derived from authors of every variety, will most readily be granted, but that it is any the less replete with originality and inspiration must very gravely be doubted. Milton was deeply read in literature of all kinds, and the profundity of his learning strikes the student over and over again when anything like careful investigation of his poems, and this one especially, is made. Passing by his accepted knowledge of Greek and Latin, as learning which was general, we find him almost alone among his contemporaries carefully studying Rabbinical literature, learned in Hebrew, Syriac and Chaldee, a deep student of the romantic literature of Europe, and of the mystical stories of the East, while thoroughly comprehending the learning of Europe in political and religious matters, even when the volumes containing

it were couched in the Dutch or the Spanish tongue. It is, therefore, little wonder that the critics who accused Milton of plagiarism, should find in the writing of Joost Van den Vondel, the germ which inspired portions of "Paradise Lost," that they should say he based his methods of construction upon Virgil, that he drew largely from the romances of France, and that he laid the Talmud and the Koran and certain Arabic literature under heavy contribution. It may all be willingly granted, and the marvel of "Paradise Lost" is not yet explained. The learning may have been in many other men, the poetic genius was in no one else, and it was the quality of impressing the freshness of his own personality upon all that he used, and of rendering it in language at once sublime and lofty, that distinguished Milton above all other men.

We have seen how years ago he had planned this poem, how it was to be his life-work and his claim for immortality. His note-books reveal the numerous suggestions of his own mind, and of the way in which his ideas wandered over the whole field of literature seeking the subject of his great epic, returning at last to the definite understanding that it must either concern English history or the Bible. Then he finally dismissed the historical problems as unsuitable for the purpose which lay deep at his heart, accepted the Bible as the only book from which he could derive the central story about which to weave the poem, and finally decided upon the episode universally and perennially interesting, that of

the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the War in Heaven so closely connected therewith. One of the curious features of "Paradise Lost" is the fact that Satan is the central figure, and not Adam or the Creator. While the poem loses in constructive quality by this fact, it undoubtedly gains in human interest and becomes strikingly attractive by reason of the tremendous personality of the Being of Evil who occupies the supreme position throughout its stanzas, and around whom the great central events of the drama steadily revolve.

A remarkable feature of "Paradise Lost," and one which differentiates it from other works by Milton, is the absence from its pages of what may be termed direct moralizing. As we have already seen, Milton was, as a rule, given to laying down the law as to moral practice in no measured terms, and he was unable to resist the temptation, both in his prose and poetical works, to insert passages both didactic and prophetic. In "Paradise Lost," however, he appears to have accepted the rule which should guide an artist, and as the aim of an important picture is to lift a man out of himself, carry him off on the wings of imagination, to some scene, poetic, pure, and delightful, and so educate him respecting the higher phases of life and thought, and the higher excellences of beauty, without forcing the moral, or preaching to the spectator, so Milton in "Paradise Lost" presents such a perfect picture. He leads away the conceptions of the reader from earthly to ethereal matters, and he

transplants the mind of the thoughtful student into quite another soil, removing him from the petty trivialities and grosser troubles of life to a world full of action, but at the same time serene, glorious, and spiritual. Into the mouth of his creations he put the most perfect utterances respecting the Divine laws which should regulate the life of humanity, couching them in magnificent phrase, while they never take the form of didactic exordiums, but are realized by the reader as the speeches consonant with the characters of the spiritual beings who are uttering them.

The invariable result, however, of such a movement on a very high plane is that the poem loses human interest. There are but two human beings represented in it, Adam and Eve, and they represent historical personages who existed at so remote a period that they have become surrounded with a sort of halo of mysterious spirituality, and their actions have little in common with the everyday life of the reader. The remaining persons in the drama are all spiritual beings, the result of which is that with all its excellences—and they are many—the poem fails to take hold of the reader in the forcible manner in which works of far less excellence often succeed in doing. It carries him away into another world, it is true, it charms, delights, and purifies him, and for the time being he loses sight of the environment of his own life, and lives amongst superior beings, glorying in their exquisite language, and full of awe and reverence for the dignity of the conception which fills the picture.

The descent, however, to everyday life is somewhat startling, and it is not easy to carry away from a perusal of the poem anything more than the exhilaration and enthusiasm derived from a temporary residence in the land of spiritual beauty painted by Milton.

When, however, we look at the author's own ideas as to the nature of poetry, we see the purpose which he had in view, and recognize that in most respects he came wonderfully close in his own great work to the ideal he had set before him. He speaks of poetry as an inspired gift of God, and tells us that its purpose is, "to allay the perturbation of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high providence in His church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; and to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship."

It is clear, therefore, that he viewed himself as the mouthpiece of a revelation to lead his readers to a contemplation of higher things, and in that he manifestly succeeded. He had one striking advantage in the subject of his poem, owing to the facts that the details respecting the Fall of Man were so well known, and that the supernatural personages who took part in the Divine drama were already in existence, and had

not to be created by the author. This advantage helped to counterbalance the difficulty of setting the scene of the poem entirely in another world. There is no need for us in these pages to consider either the theological aspect of the poem or the metaphysical structure upon which it is built. The scene opens immediately after the Fall of Satan and his host, and after the first soliloquy of the great spirit of Evil we are carried to the debate which took place amongst his followers respecting the form of the revenge that was to be undertaken. The decision, of course, is to make an attack upon the newly created human pair. A little later on the author transports us to Heaven, where the Divine scheme of redemption is set forth; then we have the beginning of the Temptation, and the defiance hurled by Satan against the angelic host. The warning taken to Adam and Eve by one of the great Archangels tells our first parents of the plot against them, and prepares them for the subtlety of the temptation. This is followed by the marvellous description of the great war in Heaven, Satan's attack upon the Celestial gates, and his effort to regain his eternally lost position. Then comes the Fall, and Milton, never able to rid himself of his perverted ideas of the subordination of women, lays all the stress of the disaster upon the weaker vessel. Towards the close of the poem we see the result of the Fall; strife, discord and death appear on the universe, and misery enters into the hearts of the unhappy pair who have forfeited Paradise.

There are wild imaginings and stern denunciations, but they give place eventually to penitence and humiliation, and although Paradise is lost, our first parents are cheered by a sense of the forgiveness of sin and by a marvellous vision of the future of the world when the promised seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

The final scene of peace, when the exiles leave their first home prepared to take their part in the life set before them, with all its troubles, but with all its expectations of future bliss, is a triumph of poetic skill.

"Paradise Lost" has another claim to attention over the various great poems of the world in that it reveals to us the character of its author, albeit such revelation is subtly conveyed, and never breaks in abruptly upon the continuity of the poem. It was Addison, we believe, who first drew attention to this characteristic. We learn nothing of Homer from the "Iliad," and little of Dante from the "Divina Commedia," and although in the "Georgics" we do learn something of the character of Virgil, yet we are told but little by the author of himself, and still less of the history which was in making around him. In "Paradise Lost," on the other hand, we have many autobiographical passages, and a considerable amount of indirect light is thrown upon the history of the times and Milton's view of events. These passages have, however, to be sought for, and only reveal themselves to a careful student, but they are there, and largely add to the interest of the poem.

Certain pungent critics have complained of constructional deficiencies in "Paradise Lost," of errors in its metaphysical structure, and of failures in the use of technical phrases, of certain alliteration, of digressions and of too thickly-sown metaphors, but these criticisms do not concern us here, and this stupendous poem, whatever its deficiencies, raised the name of its author to the very highest rank, and marked him out as one who had a magnificent command of the English language, a profundity of learning which has seldom been equalled, a depth of spiritual insight of incomparable excellence, and a quality of poetic utterance almost without parallel.

It may be well in passing to refer to one curious grammatical feature which Masson was the first to point out, namely, Milton's abstinence from the use of the neuter possessive pronoun, "its." In the whole of Milton's poetry this word, "its," occurs but three times, "his" or "her" occurring in places in which "its" would now be used. The word is also used very seldom in his prose, and in his Latin Grammar Milton is most emphatic in refusing to make use of this pronominal neuter form which marks the introduction of a later mannerism in the English language, and of a carelessness in construction which did not belong to the work of the great masters of the best period of English letters.

Few poetical works in English have so frequently been translated into other languages as "Paradise Lost." It has appeared in French,

German, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Armenian, Bohemian, Danish, Dutch, Hungarian, Icelandic, Latin, Manx, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, and Welsh, and there are many editions of the work in these languages. It has, in fact, been considered, and very justly so, one of the most typical, and one of the very finest poems ever written in English, and accepted as a representative work worthy of all praise throughout the world for its unrivalled poetic beauty, its wealth of expression, and grand imaginative quality.

It is not easy, amidst the glories of "Paradise Lost," to select a passage fittingly illustrative of the great poem, but the following grand lines are very representative of the stately dignity of Milton's work:

No sooner had the Almighty ceased, but all
The multitude of angels, with a shout,
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy, heaven rung
With jubilee, and loud hosannas fill'd
The eternal regions: lowly reverent
Towards either throne they bow, and to the ground,
With solemn adoration, down they cast
Their crowns, inwove with amarant and gold:
Immortal amarant, a flower which once
In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
Began to bloom; but soon, for man's offence,
To heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,
And flowers aloft, shading the fount of life,
And where the river of bliss, through 'midst of
heaven,
Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream:

With these, that never fade, the spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks, inwreathed with
beams:

Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the bright
Pavement, that like a sea of jasper shone,
Impurpled with celestial roses, smiled.

Then, crown'd again, their golden harps they took,
Harps ever tuned, that glittering by their side
Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet
Of charming symphony they introduce
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high;
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join
Melodious part, such concord is in heaven.

"Thee, Father," first they sung, "Omnipotent,
Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
Eternal King," etc.

We must not give much space to the consideration of the less important poem, "Paradise Regained," which followed "Paradise Lost." It is a striking contrast to the companion work, in its almost bald simplicity and in the absence of the classical allusions and gorgeously-worded metaphors which are an integral part of "Paradise Lost." From the points of view of artistic excellence and perfect construction, "Paradise Regained" may be claimed as the greater poem, but it has never won the same measure of admiration as has its greater rival, and the reason is perhaps that there is less mystery in its language and the imagery is far simpler and more natural. "Paradise Regained" does not possess the power to take the reader into another world, and its perusal leaves him comparatively unimpressed. It is stately in its conception, but

the drama is evolved without passion, and without the wealth of phrases and strange similes which thrill the student in the longer poem. It is the story of Christ's temptation in which He vanquishes the Evil One, and it is told in perfect verse with a certain academic quality of culture which leaves one cold, and never rises even in its more thrilling passages, to the heights of impassioned eloquence that mark the grand soliloquies of "Paradise Lost."

To the third poem, "Samson Agonistes," a separate chapter is given in this work.

A few words must be added respecting the sonnets. The most natural comparison which suggests itself is with the Book of Psalms, and in many ways they cannot fail to remind the reader of these immortal poems. The sonnets are strikingly personal, spontaneous expressions of strong feeling, respecting actual events, the one on the author's blindness being one of the most beautiful:

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

When I consider how my light is spent
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more
 bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest He, returning, chide;
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
 I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
 Either man's work, or his own gifts: who best

Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best ; his state
Is kingly : thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :
They also serve who only stand and wait."

while amongst the most striking are those which refer to Cromwell and the massacre in Piedmont. It is curious that we have not any record of personal communications between Cromwell and Milton, or even of the two men having ever met. Both were such strong independents in their lines of action, and both such masterful men, that perhaps close acquaintance would have meant continual friction. Milton, however, had an immense belief in Cromwell, and proclaimed it very definitely in his sonnets.

It is from the sonnets that many of the most beautiful phrases with which Milton has enriched the English language have been taken, and such well-known quotations as "Peace hath her victories No less renowned than war," "They also serve who only stand and wait," "Vane, young in years, but in sage counsel old," and "All is, if I have grace to use it so, As ever in my great taskmaster's eye," are typical of the quotations so constantly made from the sonnets which form Milton's contributions to his poetic works during the Civil War. In construction nothing can equal them, each one is a gem of the purest water, in phrase perfectly balanced and exquisitely melodious, and had the great author composed nothing but these sonnets, he would have had to be reckoned as one of the foremost of English poets, and as the one who

had the most sensitive control of the English language, using it as a great organ from which his refined melody might emerge.

The only other poetical works to which we need refer are the lyrical renderings of the Psalms, the various translations from Greek or Latin authors which adorn the prose works, and a few earlier poems. By no stretch of imagination can the paraphrase of the Psalms be considered a success. The project of turning the Psalms into lyrical metre was undertaken by Milton in order that the version which appeared in the Book of Common Prayer might be superseded, not because of any demerits that this version possessed, but simply because it was the accepted version of the Church of England. Fortunately Milton found the task beyond his power, and as other things interested him more, his adaptation did not proceed very far. The following may be given as an example of the poetical quality of the incomplete version.

PSALM I.

(Done into verse 1653.)

Blest is the man who hath not walked astray
In the counsel of the wicked, and i' the way
Of sinners hath not stood, and in the seat
Of scorers hath not sat. But in the great
Jehovah's law is ever his delight,
And in his law he studies day and night.
He shall be as a tree which, planted, grows
By watery streams, and in his season knows
To yield his fruit, and his leaf shall not fall,

And what he takes in hand shall prosper all.
 Not so the wicked, but as chaff which fanned
 The wind drives, so the wicked shall not stand
 In judgment, or abide their trial then,
 Nor sinners in the assembly of just men;
 For the Lord knows the upright way of the just,
 And the way of bad men to ruin must.

In the translations he was far more successful, and some of his quotations from Horace and the Greek tragedians, while not professing to be absolutely literal, were pleasing and even melodious in their English form.

Perhaps the two here given are as satisfactory as any which he attempted.

IN "AREOPAGITICA," 1644.

'This is true Liberty, when freeborn men,
 Having to advise the public, may speak free;
 Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise;
 Who neither can, nor will, may hold his peace;
 What can be juster in a state than this?

—EURIPIDES, *Supplices*.

IN "TETRACHORDON," 1645.

Whom do we count a good man? Whom but he
 Who keeps the laws and statutes of the senate,
 Who judges in great suits and controversies,
 Whose witness and opinion wins the cause?
 But his own house, and the whole neighbourhood,
 See his foul inside through his whited skin.

—HORACE, *Ep.* i, 16.

The earlier poems include the Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester, the Song on May

Morning, the fragment on the Passion, and the lines on Time, together with a few other pieces that do not deserve much attention. All are distinguished by sonorous phrase, by a plenitude of metaphors taken from the Classics, and by melodious measure, but none of them are works of the first degree of excellence.

“SAMSON AGONISTES”

IT may, perhaps, strike the reader as curious that the last poetic work of Milton should be chosen as a typical specimen rather than his greatest, but we think there are reasons to justify this selection. A very brief sketch has, indeed, been given of “Paradise Lost,” and some explanatory criticisms have been ventured upon, but the poem, as a whole, is too long for proper consideration in this section of so small a book, and it does not lend itself so well as does “Samson Agonistes” to examination by quotation. Added to this, although “Paradise Lost” is Milton’s greatest work, it is not, in our opinion, the most typical, and we believe it will be found that “Samson Agonistes” gives a fuller revelation of the author, of the times in which he lived, with all their stirring political movements, and of his own outlook upon events past, present, and to come.

“Samson Agonistes” is a great metaphor of the tragedy of Milton’s own life. The selection of its subject was not so much the work of his choice as the result of destiny, and it is probable that there is no character in all the Biblical story which to Milton so clearly personified himself as

that of Samson. Milton's acquaintance with the Authorized Version of the Bible was most intimate; his learning with respect to that book was even greater than his learning with regard to all other literature. He had never viewed it as literature alone. It had been to him far more: an inspired Word of God, a Divine guide for life, and yet more, a text book from which to seek guidance in all the complexities of political and social life. In it he found the famous story of Samson, and in this story, as in a mirror, he saw himself and his country pictured, as the blind warrior in the hands of the successful Philistines. The lyrical poem became a vehicle for his own feelings in the decline of his days, and his eager sympathy with Samson in distress and affliction led him to carry the resemblance to the blind warrior very far, and to see in the destruction of his most cherished hopes, and the position of social affairs under Charles II, a clear correspondence with the state of Israel under the Philistines. He wrote the poem in blank verse, but he did not condescend to apologize for doing so, as on a previous occasion he had done. The law of liberty, which was the enkindling motive in his life, and which led him to refuse adherence to all authority which did not happen to coincide with his own personal views, had led him to decline acquiescence in the severe literary regulations constituting the laws of poetry. Because they were considered laws Milton would have none of them, and would adopt his own metre and his own construction in verse, claiming an

independence in that, as in everything else, and setting forth his claim in a very definite statement.

In "Samson Agonistes" he modelled his poem upon a Greek tragedy, casting it in the most severe and perfect form. He used blank verse as the most suitable medium for the conveyance of his thoughts, but he made his blank verse both architectonic and in places alliterative rather than be bound by the conventions even of the medium he had selected. In an opening preface he explains why he had cast the poem in a tragic form. He speaks of the tragedy as "the gravest and most profitable of all other poems," and proceeds to refer to Cicero, Plutarch, Euripides, Paræus, Caesar, Seneca, and St. Gregory Nazianzen, with reference to their compositions in tragic form. He then gives a few words respecting the construction of a true tragedy, its division into stanzas, and the circumscription of time wherein the whole drama begins and ends, stating that the ancient rule and best example is that the action should comprise only twenty-four hours, and this rule of Æschylus and Sophocles he had adopted.

Following this comes a brief explanation of the drama, entitled, "The Argument," and then the tragedy itself. The student who is familiar with the grandest works of the Greek tragedians will recognize the extremely close resemblance between these and "Samson Agonistes." The poem might almost be the work of Euripides, dealing with a Hebrew episode, but setting it in

the most austere accurate Greek form. As a piece of clear, definite composition it recalls the work of a great Greek sculptor for its perfection of form and marvellous finish. The occasion is some high day or holiday, and Samson, relieved for the time of the chains that fettered him, and allowed to come out into the open air, dismisses his attendant and soliloquizes. For a while he is solitary, and then some of his own people, natives of Dan, visit him. They mourn his plight, and strive to console him, offering him such comfort as was within their power. Mingled, however, with their comfort, and quite perceptible to the blind captive, is an undercurrent of feeling against Samson for having given way to a temptation which they would fain believe they could have overcome, and for having therefore allowed the divinely given gift of strength to miss the purpose for which they had thought it was sent, that of delivering them from the control of their enemies. During the conversation, Samson's aged father, Manoah, approaches, anxious to tell his son of the progress of the negotiations he had been conducting, with a view to the release of the captive from the hands of his enemies. He is overcome with grief at seeing the condition of his son, and is supposed to upbraid Heaven for the gift of a son at all, mingling with his complaint just the same expostulation with Samson for his failure. Samson takes the words out of his mouth, and takes to himself the entire blame for his present condition. He knew of his great destiny, he said, but was over-

come with pride, and fancied that the world was before him, and that nothing could gainsay the purpose he had in view. He had to learn, first of all, his own weakness, and secondly, the fact that the Divine purpose had not been grasped by him. Manoah then adds to his woe by pointing out that his sin had resulted in the glorification of the heathen god Dagon, and that therefore Samson's failure to fulfil his high purpose had actually resulted in blasphemy towards the God of Israel. Samson, however, did not believe that the end had yet come. He knew his faults, but was still conscious of a Divine destiny, although he had lost all desire in life, and was wishful that the end might come.

Manoah, after a while, telling him that the Philistines were having their holiday, in honour of their deliverance from their great opponent, departs to continue his negotiations with the Lords of the Council for the redemption of his son. The conversation is continued by the men of Dan, and then presently Delilah approaches, and a wonderful scene of accusation and recrimination takes place between the husband and wife. She endeavours to justify her action by her love of her country, and even by the love she bore to him, but he bitterly refuses to accept any explanation, and dismisses her with haughty contumely. When she has passed out of sight, another visitor approaches, Harapha, a great Philistine giant and Samson's special antagonist. This person is a creation of the poet, and it was a marked stroke of genius to

bring this new character into the story. Harapha did not come upon any mission of condolence; his office was to taunt Samson with his loss of strength, and to threaten him with further dishonour. Samson challenges him, and shows himself by far the stronger man of the two, so far as intellectual ability is concerned, and the cool determination which constitutes true courage. Harapha, finding that Samson's spirit has not been humbled by his captivity, and that he is unable to glory over him in his trouble, or arouse his passion that he might blaspheme the God of Israel, leaves him, vowing revenge, and shortly afterwards a messenger from the Philistines comes to call Samson before the great assembly that they may jeer at his blindness, and taunt him for his want of strength. Samson at first declines to go with them; he refuses to provide sport for his enemies, and will not put in an appearance at the Festival of their false god, and he therefore dismisses the messenger, and conscious of his slowly returning strength, and of their inability to force compliance with their will, he stoutly refuses to go with the officer, and resumes his conversation with his Israelitish friends. They regret his decision, feeling that perhaps it will add more fuel to an already violent flame, and while they are discussing the matter with him, a renewed sense of the Divine destiny which has hung over his life from the very beginning, comes to him, and in his returning strength he sees the answer sent by God to his oft-repeated prayer for forgiveness, and the warning that the

Divine gift was to be used for right purposes, and not prostituted to evil ends. By the time the messenger is on his way back from the Lords of the Council, Samson has made up his mind that the opportunity of his life is before him, and that his duty is to go before his enemies. The officer comes back charged with an insulting message, telling him that failing his compliance his enemies would force him to come to them. Samson needs no such force, for to the great delight of the messenger he at once gets himself ready to go, and passes out of sight cheered by the words of his companions, and by their prayer that God would help him in his extremity. Then Manoah appears again, as he was unable to remain in the city to see his son exposed to ridicule, but was anxious to report that the negotiations for the ransom of Samson were approaching completion. In the interval he has become more cheerful, and looks forward to tending Samson himself, and to a manifestation of the workings of Divine Providence in his son's returning strength. The conversation is interrupted by the sound of a great shout, as of an uproar, and presently a messenger comes running out from the town of Gaza, bringing with him the story of Samson's final exploit in pulling down the roof and destroying more enemies in his death than he had been able to do during his life. The chorus of Israelites, by this time divided into two semi-choruses, according to the most exact Greek rules and regulations, exchanges strophe and antistrophe of lamentation coupled

with exultation over the event, and then united into one great chorus, praises God for the marvellous way in which Samson had been enabled to fulfil his original destiny, and receive proof of Divine forgiveness for his sin.

It is interesting to notice that in this, his last poem, Milton returned to the dramatic form which he had adopted at the earlier stages of his career, and that at a time when the Puritan feeling against the drama was at its strongest. He expressly states in the preface that this work was never intended for the stage, but these words were hardly needed at the time when the poem first made its appearance, inasmuch as a drama based upon a Scriptural episode, and containing such vehement protests against the moral corruption pervading Court and State, would certainly have not have been welcomed at either of the London playhouses. The words do not imply that "*Samson Agonistes*" could not be performed as a stage play; they simply state that this was not the original purpose of the author. The poem has all the qualities necessary for dramatic presentation, but was probably intended at the first merely to be read, and not to be acted.

The remarkable interest it possesses for the reader consists in the fact that it is intensely subjective, and, as has been stated, no other work by Milton so reveals the author himself. In this subjective quality there are two distinct parts; at times, Milton, in the person of Samson, pictures himself in his blindness and dis-

tress, and at other times, in the same person, he pictures his country personified and suffering under the afflictions of the new political *régime*. In this double representation, which has always to be borne in mind by the reader, we have the living qualities of the drama; all the political life for which Milton had sacrificed his best endeavours had been swept away, he had seen his ideals disappear, and the political movements which appeared to him to be working for righteous ends, and which were in time to purify and elevate the country, suddenly brought to an end, while the absolute reverse took possession of the political world, and made its influence felt in every section of society. It was not alone that Puritanism had come to an end, but the pendulum had swung to the opposite extreme, and the magnificent sensuality of the Court, the gay carelessness and indifference of the people, and the triumph of Episcopacy in the Church, were all signs to Milton that the dreaded reaction had taken place, and that, from his point of view, England was in the hands of the Philistines. Side by side with this national change was the sadness of his own personal condition; he was well on in years, totally blind, and absolutely deprived of any opportunity of serving his country, while he saw the great ship of State steadily making its way towards those breakers which to him only concealed everything that was deadly in national life. Whether or not we agree with the view he had taken of government and party, we cannot but sympathize with

him in the way in which he had seen destruction come over all his hopes, and in this poem, so full of pathos, he lays bare with an unsparing hand his own bitter disappointment, his regrets for the past, and his dismal expectations for the future. Perhaps in the final catastrophe he was optimistically anticipating that which he hoped might come to pass, the wreck of the Philistine party, with all that it involved for England.

Nothing perhaps that he ever wrote is finer in its exquisite pathos than Samson's opening soliloquy on his blindness, and the repetition three times in one line of the word "dark," is one of the most forcible methods ever adopted by a poet to express most intensely the quality of the affliction he is describing. It is a remarkable poetic thought that alludes to sight being confined to the eye "so obvious and so easy to be quenched," instead of being diffused throughout the whole of the body, and the soliloquy ends with a very touching reference to the dread and fear of insult which never fails to characterize a blind captive. The remarkable lines are as follows:

Chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annulled, which might in part my grief have eased.
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm, the vilest here excel me;
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed

To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own ;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day !
O first-created beam, and thou great Word,
“ Let there be light, and light was over all,”
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part, why was the sight
To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
So obvious and so easy to be quenched?
And not, as feeling, through all parts diffused
That she might look at will through every pore
Then had I not been thus exiled from light,
As in the land of darkness, yet in light,
To live a life half-dead, a living death,
And buried ; but, O yet more miserable !
Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave,
Buried, yet not exempt,
By privilege of death and burial,
From worst of other evils, pains, and wrongs,
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet steering this way ;
Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
At my affliction.

In all Milton's dejection, however, he is supported by the firm acceptance of the doctrine of Divine ruling. Disappointed he certainly is, profoundly so, but in the words he puts into the mouth of the chorus, he states in dignified utterance, his continued absolute belief in the guidance of the Creator.

Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men,
Unless there be who think not God at all ;
If any be, they walk obscure ;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt His ways not just,
As to His own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wandering thought,
Regardless of His glory's diminution ;
Till, by their own perplexities involved,
They ravel more, still less resolved,
But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine the Interminable,
And tie Him to His own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not Himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whomso it pleases Him by choice
From national obstruction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt ;
For with His own laws He can best dispense.

Fortified though he is by this intense belief in the wisdom of God, he cannot but feel how little service he is to his nation, and the spirit of sad dejection which he puts into the mouth of Samson, leads him to anticipate his own end, and almost to rejoice in its near approach.

Now blind, disheartened, shamed, dishonoured,
quelled,
To what can I be useful? wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heaven imposed?
But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,
Or pitied object, these redundant locks,
Robustious to no purpose, clustering down,
Vain monument of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numbness craze my limbs
To a contemptible old age obscure.

And again:

. . . these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor the other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand;
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself;
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

He looks out over the world with a sort of contempt for man, feeling that in his changeableness, the fickleness of his faith, his carelessness and his sin, he is unworthy of any of the goodness of God, and the exalted poetry in which the chorus regards the human creation but re-echoes Milton's own views of the fickleness of his people.

God of our fathers! what is man,
That thou, towards him, with hand so various,
(Or might I say contrarious?)
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as thou rulest

The angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute?
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That, wandering loose about,
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
Heads without name, no more remembered;
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorned,
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect;

We have already referred more than once to Milton's perverted ideas about womanhood, the opinions to which he gave utterance in his divorce tracts, and to which pugnaciously he returned again and again. Here, in his last poem, he has an opportunity ready to his hand in the interview between Samson and Delilah for a final outburst of feeling against the woman who had deceived his hero. Delilah comes to Samson with an earnest endeavour to tell the reason of her folly; at first attributing it to curiosity and the inquisitiveness which characterizes her sex, and then explaining that it was due to weakness, and proceeding to narrate the strong temptations brought to bear upon her, that she might unravel the secret of his strength. She unbosoms quite frankly all the efforts made by her countrymen, high in position in both Church and State, to induce her to reveal the secret, explaining to him the position she was offered as the deliverer of her country, and the patriotic instincts which led her to place the love of her nation before the affection due to her

husband. She appeals to him to consider her side of the question as well as his own; but conscious now of the dreadful trouble she has brought upon him, she implores his forgiveness, and it is with this end in view that she humbles herself and tells the story of her temptation.

Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

* * * * *

Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson;
Afford me place to show what recompense
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
To afflict thyself in vain. Though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoyed
Where other senses want not their delights,
At home, in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance to which
Eyesight exposes, daily, men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and care,
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age,
With all things grateful cheered, and so supplied,
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt
miss.

Her petition is, however, indignantly rejected; nothing could ever persuade Milton that weakness was any excuse for folly, or that it was any-

thing more than an aggravation of it, and all the temptations to which Delilah refers, subtle though they were, are brushed aside by Samson as though they were threads of a cobweb; he refuses to believe, even for a moment, that there was the slightest excuse for her action, or the least warrant for her appealing to him for forgiveness. Milton had always shown himself incapable of any understanding of an opponent's position, least of all when that opponent was a woman, and the same attitude characterized him to the end. Delilah appeals in touching words for forgiveness, but she is rejected with contumely.

Out, out, hyæna! these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then, as repentant, to submit, beseech,
And reconcilment moved with feigned remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change;
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail;
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;

After the interview between Samson and Harapha, there comes a glimmering expectation of some future retribution which would overtake the enemies of his country, and this he puts into the mouth of the chorus in the following words:

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all

That tyranny or fortune can inflict.
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might endued
Above the sons of men ; but sight bereaved
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.

In his description of the Philistines, he is clearly thinking of the indulgent Court, and when he refers to "sword-players and every sort of gymnastic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners, jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics," he is but picturing the frivolous trivialities then so popular. When he decides to go with the Philistine warrior, the chorus breaks out into an impassioned and eloquent prayer.

Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve His glory best, and spread His
name
Great among the heathen round ;
Send thee the Angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who, from thy father's field,
Rode up in flames after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire ; that Spirit, that first rushed on thee
In the camp of Dan,
Be efficacious in thee now at need !

And then as we near the conclusion of the whole matter, in touching words he describes himself as

I among these, aloof obscurely stood,
The Feast and noon grew high and sacrifice

Had filled their hearts with mirth, high cheer and
 wine,
 When to their sports they turned ;

while the destruction of the great temple is
 vividly presented in the following fine phrases :

This uttered, straining all his nerves, he bowed ;
 As with the force of winds and waters pent,
 When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
 With horrible convulsion to and fro
 He tugged, he shook, till down they came, and
 drew

The whole roof after them with burst of thunder
 Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
 Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
 Their choice nobility and flower, not only
 Of this, but each Philistian city round,
 Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
 Samson, with these immixed, inevitably
 Pulled down the same destruction on himself ;
 The vulgar only scaped who stood without.

Chorus. O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious !

The poem concludes with a prophesy of the
 final triumph of virtue which shows us the mourn-
 ful and dejected old poet rising up under the
 crushing blow of all his afflictions and looking
 forward to a distant future of happiness which
 was certain to arrive.

Its last phrases bear witness to the perfection
 of Divine justice and to the final triumph of
 peace.

All is best, though we oft doubt
 What the unsearchable dispose
 Of Highest Wisdom brings about

And ever best found in the close.
Oft He seems to hide His face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to His faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent.
His servants He, with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.

BOOKS ABOUT MILTON

THE student who desires to study the life and works of John Milton has an advantage over the student of any other English poet, in the fact that in Masson's "Life of Milton"¹ he possesses an exhaustive treatise unequalled in the history of literature. This monumental work in its six great volumes treats most exhaustively with every episode of importance in the period during which Milton lived and worked, and as the production of a man of boundless enthusiasm and limitless powers of research, it stands pre-eminent amongst memoirs. It is almost impossible to obtain any facts, or to present any view of the career or the works of the poet not already penned within the pages of this book, and every student since 1859 has had to confess that from Masson's work he has derived almost everything he knows concerning the poet.

As far back as the times of Addison² and Dr. Johnson,³ the poems of John Milton have received careful and critical examination, and although the decision arrived at by both these writers was not such as would commend itself

¹ 2040 d B. M.

² 11626 b 33 (2) B. M.

³ 11601 c 3-5 B. M.

to the present generation, yet many of their remarks are of great value in appreciating the qualities of the poet. Masson deals with all previous accounts of Milton, but it is well for the student to refer at first hand to the writings of Johnson and Addison before perusing the illuminating comment made by the learned Scotsman, upon the earlier workers in the same field.

There are numerous important lives of Milton in existence, but most of them derive their facts from the memoir of the poet by E. and J. Phillips,¹ and from the collections for the "Life of Milton" written by Aubrey. Such memoirs as those by Carpenter, Diderot, Hayley, Hunter, Hood, Ivimey, Keightley, Macaulay, Symmons, Todd, Tulloch, Garnett, Acton, and Burney, may be mentioned, but the contents of all are gathered up in the volumes by Masson already alluded to. Almost the only other author who has been able to bring thoroughly original influence to bear upon the subject was Mark Pattison, who, in 1879, in his "Milton,"² in the English Men of Letters Series, wrote with that rare discrimination, historical accuracy, and wonderful charm which characterized his best works.

To the student who has not the opportunity of reading through Masson's exhaustive work, the treatise by Mark Pattison may be recommended. A book entitled "The Age of Milton," by Professor Masterman, is an excellent intro-

¹ 134 b 5 B. M.

² 2326 b 27 B. M.

duction to the literature of the period, and an admirable assistance to a proper understanding of Milton's works; while a volume called "Milton in England," by Mrs. Mead, may be commended to any one in search of the picturesque details respecting the various homes which Milton possessed, and the neighbourhood of the places where he resided.

PORTRAITS OF JOHN MILTON

THERE has been very much controversy respecting the true portraiture of John Milton, and a good deal of research is still necessary to unravel the details of the perplexing problem concerning the portraits believed to represent the poet. The author of this volume has in hand a treatise dealing with the entire subject, but meantime it may be well to give here a few notes respecting some special portraits.

There are two representing Milton as a lad or young man which appear to be undoubtedly genuine. One of them is the Disney portrait, which was lately in the possession of Edgar Disney, Esq., of the Hyde, Ingatestone, Essex, and represents a boy of the age of ten, wearing a striped costume and a large white lace collar. This was painted in 1618. It is an oval, and was bought by Mr. Thomas Hollis, the great authority on portraits of Milton, on the 3rd June 1760, at the sale of the effects of Mr. Charles Stanhope, and has been attributed to Cornelis Janssen. The previous owner had purchased it from the executors of Milton's widow, and it is most certainly one of the two portraits which belonged to the widow, and which are recorded

in the inventory of her effects at Nantwich in 1727. It is the picture mentioned by Aubrey, and was engraved by Cipriani in 1760.

The other portrait in the possession of the widow was painted when the poet was about twenty, according to the statement of his surviving daughter, Deborah Clarke, made by her to the celebrated engraver Vertue, on the occasion of their interview on 12th August, 1721. This portrait appears to have been in 1731 in the possession of the Rt. Hon. Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons, he having purchased it from the executors of Milton's widow, after her death in 1727. It was engraved by Vertue, with an inscription stating where it was at that time, and on several other occasions engravings were made of it, one done in 1794 by W. N. Gardiner, having upon it an inscription to the effect that Aubrey had certified on the back of the picture in his own handwriting, that it was the original work, once in the possession of Mrs. Milton. This picture has been lost sight of, as it went out of the possession of the Earl of Onslow in or about the year 1828, when it was sold with some other pictures to a purchaser named Moore, who was "not a dealer."

Of portraits of the poet in later years which are absolutely genuine there are two—the first the Faithorne drawing, drawn from the life in Milton's sixty-second year (1670), and engraved with his own sanction for the first edition of his "History of Britain." As late as 1760 this drawing was certainly in existence, in the possession of

the Tonson family, and an etching from it was made by Cipriani for the Milton enthusiast, Mr. Thomas Hollis. It has now disappeared, and the only true remaining Faithorne is Faithorne's own engraving from the drawing, published in 1670, which forms the frontispiece of this volume. The other authentic one closely resembles the Faithorne drawing, and was formerly in possession of J. Richardson, senior. It now remains at Bayfordbury, in the possession of the Baker family, who succeeded to it as an heirloom from Mr. Jacob Tonson. It was photographed in 1861, and a reproduction appears in a book called "Milton's Ramblings," written by Mr. Leigh Sotheby.

The bust in the library at Christ's College, Cambridge, which also appears in this book by permission of the Master, is now generally accepted as an authoritative work. It is supposed to be a plaster cast from an original mould taken from life about 1654, when Milton was sixteen years younger than in the Faithorne drawing; the face alone done *ad vivum*, the hair and the rest of the head having been added in modelling. The bust was long in the possession of the engraver Vertue, who "believed it was done by one Pierce, a sculptor of good reputation in those times, the same who made the bust in marble of Sir Christopher Wren, which is in the Bodleian Library." An engraving after it by Vertue himself was prefixed to Birch's edition of "Milton's Prose Works" in 1753. At Vertue's death in 1756 the bust appears to have been purchased

by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who afterwards parted with it to Mr. Thomas Hollis, who had it twice engraved by Cipriani, and then by gift it passed among Mr. Hollis's effects to Christ's College, Cambridge, where it now is.

In the hall of the same college there hangs a delightful portrait in oil representing a very young man, which is considered to be a portrait of Milton, and has some high claim to that reputation. It also came to the college through Mr. Hollis, but some part of its history has not yet been made quite clear. It also is illustrated in this book by kind permission of the Master.

In the collection of miniatures at Montagu House there is a very beautiful one signed by Samuel Cooper, representing a young man with very long fair hair falling over his shoulders. It was once in the possession of a Mr. Villiers of Tours, and was sold at a sale at Foster's, and purchased by the Duke of Buccleuch. It is believed to represent Milton, and was first recognized as a portrait of the poet by Michael Bryan, the author of Bryan's "Dictionary of Painters." It is a very charming picture, and there is some evidence to support the correctness of Bryan's surmise. It is here reproduced by permission of its owner.

The other portrait in this volume is at the National Portrait Gallery, and is the work of Pieter Van der Plaas; it was presented to the gallery in 1839 by Mr. Capel Lofft. It is a half-length portrait, but its authenticity has not been completely established. In the possession of

Mr. A. E. Shipley, of Christ's College, Cambridge, there is a delightful portrait considered to represent Milton, and the same gentleman has a miniature believed to be a contemporary copy of the missing Onslow portrait. Fuller information regarding these, and the very numerous engravings bearing the name of Milton, will presently be found in the treatise already been alluded to.

The author will be very glad to receive information from any reader respecting portraits bearing the name of Milton, especially as it ought to be possible to trace the Onslow picture, which is probably resting in some private collection unknown and unidentified. It represents a youth with long hair, and with a large white falling ruff; his coat has a series of small buttons down the centre, and the picture could easily be identified from the engravings made of it by Houbraken, Cipriani, Baldwin, Gardner, and Radclyffe, copies of which are appended to various books relating to the poet.

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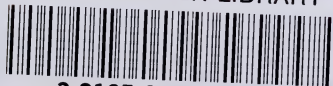
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